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## COLLECTED POEMS



# COLLECTED POEMS

1901—1918

BY

WALTER DE LA MARE

IN TWO VOLUMES

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**SONGS OF CHILDHOOD: 1901**  
**TO JILL**



## SLEEPYHEAD

AS I lay awake in the white moonlight,  
I heard a faint singing in the wood,

“ Out of bed,  
Sleepyhead,  
Put your white foot, now;  
Here are we  
Beneath the tree  
Singing round the root now.”

I looked out of window, in the white moonlight,  
The leaves were like snow in the wood —

“ Come away,  
Child, and play  
Light with the gnomies;  
In a mound,  
Green and round,  
That’s where their home is.”

“ Honey sweet,  
Curds to eat,  
Cream and frumenty,  
Shells and beads,  
Poppy seeds,  
You shall have plenty.”



## SONGS OF CHILDHOOD: 1901

But, as soon as I stooped in the dim moonlight  
To put on my stocking and my shoe,  
The sweet shrill singing echoed faintly away,  
And the grey of the morning peeped through,  
And instead of the gnomies there came a red robin  
To sing of the buttercups and dew.

## BLUEBELLS

**W**HERE the bluebells and the wind are,  
Fairies in a ring I spied,  
And I heard a little linnet  
Singing near beside.

Where the primrose and the dew are —  
Soon were sped the fairies all:  
Only now the green turf freshens,  
And the linnets call.

## LOVELOCKS

**I** WATCHED the Lady Caroline  
Bind up her dark and beauteous hair;  
Her face was rosy in the glass,  
And 'twixt the coils her hands would pass,  
    White in the candleshine.

Her bottles on the table lay,  
Stoppered, yet sweet of violet;  
Her image in the mirror stooped  
To view those locks as lightly looped  
    As cherry boughs in May.

The snowy night lay dim without,  
I heard the Waits their sweet song sing;  
The window smouldered keen with frost;  
Yet still she twisted, sleeked and tossed  
    Her beauteous hair about.

## TARTARY

**I**F I were Lord of Tartary,  
Myself and me alone,  
My bed should be of ivory,  
Of beaten gold my throne;  
And in my court would peacocks flaunt,  
And in my forests tigers haunt,  
And in my pools great fishes slant  
Their fins athwart the sun.

If I were Lord of Tartary,  
Trumpeters every day  
To every meal should summon me,  
And in my courtyard bray;  
And in the evening lamps would shine,  
Yellow as honey, red as wine,  
While harp, and flute, and mandoline,  
Made music sweet and gay.

If I were Lord of Tartary,  
I'd wear a robe of beads,  
White, and gold, and green they'd be —  
And clustered thick as seeds;  
And ere should wane the morning-star,  
I'd don my robe and scimitar,

## SONGS OF CHILDHOOD: 1901

And zebras seven should draw my car  
Through Tartary's dark glades.

Lord of the fruits of Tartary,  
Her rivers silver-pale!  
Lord of the hills of Tartary,  
Glen, thicket, wood, and dale!  
Her flashing stars, her scented breeze,  
Her trembling lakes, like foamless seas,  
Her bird-delighting citron-trees  
In every purple vale!

## THE BUCKLE

**I** HAD a silver buckle,  
I sewed it on my shoe,  
And 'neath a sprig of mistletoe  
I danced the evening through.

I had a bunch of cowslips,  
I hid them in a grot,  
In case the elves should come by night  
And me remember not.

I had a yellow riband,  
I tied it in my hair,  
That, walking in the garden,  
The birds might see it there.

I had a secret laughter,  
I laughed it near the wall:  
Only the ivy and the wind  
May tell of it at all.

## THE HARE

**I**N the black furrow of a field  
I saw an old witch-hare this night;  
And she cocked a lissome ear,  
And she eyed the moon so bright,  
And she nibbled of the green;  
And I whispered "Wh-s-st! witch-hare,"  
Away like a ghostie o'er the field  
She fled, and left the moonlight there.

## BUNCHES OF GRAPES

"**BUNCHES** of grapes," says Timothy;  
"Pomegranates pink," says Elaine;  
"A junket of cream and a cranberry tart  
For me," says Jane.

"Love-in-a-mist," says Timothy;  
"Primroses pale," says Elaine;  
A nosegay of pinks and mignonette  
For me," says Jane.

"Chariots of gold," says Timothy;  
"Silvery wings," says Elaine;  
"A bumpity ride in a waggon of hay  
For me," says Jane.



## JOHN MOULDY

I SPIED John Mouldy in his cellar,  
Deep down twenty steps of stone;  
In the dusk he sat a-smiling,  
Smiling there alone.

He read no book, he snuffed no candle;  
The rats ran in, the rats ran out;  
And far and near, the drip of water  
Went whispering about.

The dusk was still, with dew a-falling,  
I saw the Dog Star bleak and grim,  
I saw a slim brown rat of Norway  
Creep over him.

I spied John Mouldy in his cellar,  
Deep down twenty steps of stone;  
In the dusk he sat a-smiling,  
Smiling there alone.

## THE FLY

**H**OW large unto the tiny fly .  
Must little things appear! —  
A rosebud like a feather bed,  
Its prickle like a spear; .

A dewdrop like a looking-glass,  
A hair like golden wire;  
The smallest grain of mustard-seed  
As fierce as coals of fire;

A loaf of bread, a lofty hill;  
A wasp, a cruel leopard;  
And specks of salt as bright to see  
As lambkins to a shepherd.

## SONG

**O FOR a moon to light me home!**

**O for a lanthorn green!**

**For those sweet stars the Pleiades,**

**That glitter in the darkling trees;**

**O for a lovelorn taper! O**

**For a lanthorn green!**

**O for a frock of tartan!**

**O for clear, wild grey eyes!**

**For fingers light as violets,**

**'Neath branches that the blackbird frets;**

**O for a thistly meadow! O**

**For clear, wild grey eyes!**

**O for a heart like almond boughs!**

**O for sweet thoughts like rain!**

**O for first-love like fields of grey**

**Shut April-buds at break of day!**

**O for a sleep like music!**

**Dreams still as rain!**

## I SAW THREE WITCHES

I SAW three witches  
That bowed down like barley,  
And straddled their brooms 'neath a louring sky,  
And, mounting a storm-cloud,  
Aloft on its margin,  
Stood black in the silver as up they did fly.

I saw three witches  
That mocked the poor sparrows  
They carried in cages of wicker along,  
Till a hawk from his eyrie  
Swooped down like an arrow,  
Smote on the cages, and ended their song.

I saw three witches  
That sailed in a shallop,  
All turning their heads with a snickering smile,  
Till a bank of green osiers  
Concealed their grim faces,  
Though I heard them lamenting for many a mile.

I saw three witches  
Asleep in a valley,

SONGS OF CHILDHOOD: 1901

Their heads in a row, like stones in a flood,  
Till the moon, creeping upward,  
Looked white through the valley,  
And turned them to bushes in bright scarlet bud.

## THE SILVER PENNY

“SAILORMAN, I'll give to you  
My bright silver penny,  
If out to sea you'll sail me  
And my dear sister Jenny.”

“Get in, young sir, I'll sail ye  
And your dear sister Jenny,  
But pay she shall her golden locks  
Instead of your penny.”

They sail away, they sail away,  
O fierce the winds blew!  
The foam flew in clouds,  
And dark the night grew!

And all the wild sea-water  
Climbed steep into the boat;  
Back to the shore again  
Sail they will not.

Drowned is the sailorman,  
Drowned is sweet Jenny.  
And drowned in the deep sea  
A bright silver penny.

## THE RAINBOW

**I** SAW the lovely arch  
Of Rainbow span the sky,  
The gold sun burning  
As the rain swept by.

In bright-ringed solitude  
The showery foliage shone  
One lovely moment,  
And the Bow was gone.

## THE FAIRIES DANCING

**I** HEARD along the early hills,  
Ere yet the lark was risen up,  
Ere yet the dawn with firelight fills  
The night-dew of the bramble-cup,—  
I heard the fairies in a ring  
Sing as they tripped a lilting round  
Soft as the moon on wavering wing.  
The starlight shook as if with sound,  
As if with echoing, and the stars  
Prankt their bright eyes with trembling gleams;  
While red with war the gusty Mars  
Rained upon earth his ruddy beams.  
He shone alone, low down the West,  
While I, behind a hawthorn-bush,  
Watched on the fairies flaxen-tressed  
The fires of the morning flush.  
Till, as a mist, their beauty died,  
Their singing shrill and fainter grew;  
And daylight tremulous and wide  
Flooded the moorland through and through;  
Till Urdon's copper weathercock  
Was reared in golden flame afar,  
And dim from moonlit dreams awoke  
The towers and groves of Arroar.



## REVERIE

WHEN slim Sophia mounts her horse  
And paces down the avenue,  
It seems an inward melody  
She paces to.

Each narrow hoof is lifted high  
Beneath the dark enclustering pines,  
A silver ray within his bit  
And bridle shines.

His eye burns deep, his tail is arched,  
And streams upon the shadowy air,  
The daylight sleeks his jetty flanks,  
His mistress' hair.

Her habit flows in darkness down,  
Upon the stirrup rests her foot,  
Her brow is lifted, as if earth  
She heeded not.

'Tis silent in the avenue,  
The sombre pines are mute of song,  
The blue is dark, there moves no breeze  
The boughs among.

## REVERIE

When slim Sophia mounts her horse  
And paces down the avenue,  
It seems an inward melody  
She paces to.

## THE THREE BEGGARS

"T'WAS autumn daybreak gold and wild,  
While past St. Ann's grey tower they shuffled,  
Three beggars spied a fairy-child  
In crimson mantle muffled.

The daybreak lighted up her face  
All pink, and sharp, and emerald-eyed;  
She looked on them a little space,  
And shrill as hautboy cried: —

"O three tall footsore men of rags  
Which walking this gold morn I see,  
What will ye give me from your bags  
For fairy kisses three? "

The first, that was a reddish man,  
Out of his bundle takes a crust:  
"La, by the tombstones of St. Ann,  
There's fee, if fee ye must! "

The second, that was a chestnut man,  
Out of his bundle draws a bone:  
"Lo, by the belfry of St. Ann,  
And all my breakfast gone! "

## THE THREE BEGGARS

The third, that was a yellow man,  
Out of his bundle picks a goat,  
"La, by the Angel of St. Anr  
And I must go without."

That changeling, lean and icy-lipped,  
Touched crust, and bone, and groat, and lo!  
Beneath her finger taper-tipped  
The magic all ran through.

Instead of crust a peacock pie,  
Instead of bone sweet venison,  
Instead of groat a white lily  
With seven blooms thereon.

And each fair cup was deep with wine:  
Such was the changeling's charity,  
The sweet feast was enough for nine,  
But not too much for three.

O toothsome meat in jelly froze!  
O tender haunch of elfin stag!  
O rich the odour that arose!  
O plump with scraps each bag!

There, in the daybreak gold and wild,  
Each merry-hearted beggar man  
Drank deep unto the fairy child,  
And blessed the good St. Ann.

## THE DWARF

“NOW, Jinnie, my dear, to the dwarf be off,  
That lives in Barberry Wood,  
And fetch me some honey, but be sure you don’t  
laugh,—  
He hates little girls that are rude, are rude,  
He hates little girls that are rude.”

Jane tapped at the door of the house in the wood,  
And the dwarf looked over the wall,  
He eyed her so queer, ’twas as much as she could  
To keep from laughing at all, at all,  
To keep from laughing at all.

His shoes down the passage came clod, clod, clod,  
And when he opened the door,  
He croaked so harsh, ’twas as much as she could  
To keep from laughing the more, the more,  
To keep from laughing the more.

As there, with his bushy red beard, he stood,  
Pricked out to double its size,  
He squinted so cross, ’twas as much as she could  
To keep the tears out of her eyes, her eyes,  
To keep the tears out of her eyes.

## THE DWARF

He slammed the door, and went clod, clod, clod,  
But while in the porch she bides,  
He squealed so fierce, 'twas as much as she could  
To keep from cracking her sides, her sides,  
To keep from cracking her sides.

He threw a pumpkin over the wall,  
And melons and apples beside,  
So thick in the air that to see them all fall,  
She laughed, and laughed, till she cried, cried,  
cried;  
Jane laughed and laughed till she cried.

Down fell her teardrops a pit-apat-pat,  
And red as a rose she grew; —  
“Kah! kah,” said the dwarf, “is it crying you’re  
at?  
It’s the very worst thing you could do, do, do,  
It’s the very worst thing you could do.”

He slipped like a monkey up into a tree,  
He shook her down cherries like rain;  
“See now,” says he, cheeping, “a blackbird I be,  
Laugh, laugh, little Jinnie, again — gain — gain,  
Laugh, laugh, little Jinnie, again.”

Ah me! what a strange, what a gladsome duet  
From a house in the deeps of a wood!  
Such shrill and such harsh voices never met yet

## SONGS OF CHILDHOOD: 1901

A-laughing as loud as they could, could, could,  
A-laughing as loud as they could.

Come Jinnie, come dwarf, cocksparrow, and bee,  
There's a ring gaudy-green in the dell,  
Sing, sing, ye sweet cherubs, that flit in the tree;  
La! who can draw tears from a well, well, well,  
Who ever drew tears from a well!

## ALULVAN

**T**HE sun is clear of bird and cloud,  
The grass shines windless, grey and still,  
In dusky ruin the owl dreams on,  
The cuckoo echoes on the hill;  
Yet soft along Alulvan's walks  
The ghost at noonday stalks.

His eyes in shadow of his hat  
Stare on the ruins of his house;  
His cloak, up-fastened with a brooch,  
Of faded velvet grey as mouse,  
Brushes the roses as he goes:  
Yet wavers not one rose.

The wild birds in a cloud fly up  
From their sweet feeding in the fruit;  
The droning of the bees and flies  
Rises gradual as a lute;  
Is it for fear the birds are flown,  
And shrills the insect-drone?

Thick is the ivy over Alulvan,  
And crisp with summer-heat its turf;



## SONGS OF CHILDHOOD: 1901

Far, far across its empty pastures  
Alulvan's sands are white with surf:  
And he himself is grey as the sea,  
Watching beneath an elder-tree.

All night the fretful, shrill Banshee  
Lurks in the ivy's dark festoons,  
Calling for ever, o'er garden and river,  
Through magpie changing of the moons:  
"Alulvan, O, alas! Alulvan,  
The doom of lone Alulvan!"

## THE PEDLAR

**T**HERE came a pedlar to an evening house;  
Sweet Lettice, from her lattice looking down,  
Wondered what man he was, so curious  
His black hair dangled on his tattered gown:  
Then lifts he up his face, with glittering eyes,—  
“What will you buy, sweetheart? — Here’s honey-  
comb,  
And mottled pippins, and sweet mulberry pies,  
Comfits and peaches, snowy cherry bloom,  
To keep in water for to make night sweet:  
All that you want, sweetheart,— come, taste and  
eat! ”

Even with his sugared words, returned to her  
The clear remembrance of a gentle voice:  
“And O! my child, should ever a flatterer  
Tap with his wares, and promise of all joys,  
And vain sweet pleasures that on earth may be,  
Seal up your ears, sing some old happy song,  
Confuse his magic who is all mockery:  
His sweets are death.” Yet, still how she doth  
long  
But just to taste, then shut the lattice tight,  
And hide her eyes from the delicious sight!

## SONGS OF CHILDHOOD: 1901

"What must I pay?" she whispered. "Pay!"  
says he,

"Pedlar I am who through this wood to roam,  
One lock of her hair is gold enough for me,  
For apple, peach, comfit, or honeycomb!"  
But from her bough a drowsy squirrel cried,  
"Trust him not, Lettice, trust, oh trust him not!"  
And many another woodland tongue beside  
Rose softly in the silence — "Trust him not!"  
Then cried the Pedlar in a bitter voice,  
"What, in the thicket, is this idle noise?"

A late, harsh blackbird smote him with her wings,  
As through the glade, dark in the dim, she flew;  
Yet still the Pedlar his old burden sings, —  
"What, pretty sweetheart, shall I show to you?  
Here's orange ribands, here's a string of pearls,  
Here's silk of buttercup and pansy glove,  
A pin of tortoiseshell for windy curls,  
A box of silver, scented sweet with clove:  
Come now," he says, with dim and lifted face,  
"I pass not often such a lonely place."

"Pluck not a hair!" a hidden rabbit cried,  
"With but one hair he'll steal thy heart away,  
Then only sorrow shall thy lattice hide:  
Go in! all honest pedlars come by day."  
There was dead silence in the drowsy wood;  
"Here's syrup for to lull sweet maids to sleep;

## THE PEDLAR

And bells for dreams, and fairy wine and food  
All day thy heart in happiness to keep"; —  
And now she takes the scissors on her thumb,—  
"O, then, no more unto my lattice come! "

Sad is the sound of weeping in the wood!  
Now only night is where the Pedlar was;  
And bleak as frost upon a quickling bud  
His magic steals in darkness, O alas!  
Why all the summer doth sweet Lettice pine?  
And, ere the wheat is ripe, why lies her gold  
Hid 'neath fresh new-plucked sprigs of eglantine?  
Why all the morning hath the cuckoo tolled,  
Sad, to and fro, in green and secret ways,  
With solemn bells the burden of his days?

And, in the market-place, what man is this  
Who wears a loop of gold upon his breast,  
Stuck heartwise; and whose glassy flatteries  
Take all the townsfolk ere they go to rest  
Who come to buy and gossip? Doth his eye  
Remember a face lovely in a wood?  
O people! hasten, hasten, do not buy  
His woeful wares; the bird of grief doth brood  
There where his heart should be; and far away  
There mourns long sorrowfulness this happy day.

## THE OGRE

'TIS moonlight on Trebarwith Vale,  
And moonlight on an Ogre keen,  
Who, prowling hungry through the dale,  
A lone cottage hath seen.

Small, with thin smoke ascending up,  
Three casements and a door —  
The Ogre eager is to tap,  
And here seems dainty store.

Sweet as a larder to a mouse,  
So to him staring down,  
Seemed the small-windowed moonlit house,  
With jasmine overgrown.

He snorted, as the billows snort  
In darkness of the night;  
Betwixt his lean locks tawny-swart,  
He glowered on the sight.

## THE OGRE

Into the garden sweet with peas  
He put his wooden shoe,  
And bending back the apple trees  
Crept covetously through;

Then, stooping, with a gloating eye  
Stared through the lattice small,  
And spied two children which did lie  
Asleep, against the wall.

Into their dreams no shadow fell  
Of his disastrous thumb  
Groping discreet, and gradual,  
Across the quiet room.

But scarce his nail had scraped the cot  
Wherein these children lay,  
As if his malice were forgot,  
It suddenly did stay.

For faintly in the ingle-nook  
He heard a cradle-song,  
That rose into his thoughts and woke  
Terror them among.

For she who in the kitchen sat  
Darning by the fire,  
Guileless of what he would be at,  
Sang sweet as wind or wire:—

## SONGS OF CHILDHOOD: 1901

"Lullay, thou little tiny child,  
By-by, lullay, lullie;  
Jesu in glory, meek and mild,  
This night remember thee!

"Fiend, witch, and goblin, foul and wild,  
He deems them smoke to be;  
Lullay, thou little tiny child,  
By-by, lullay, lullie! "

The Ogre lifted up his eyes  
Into the moon's pale ray,  
And gazed upon her leopard-wise,  
Cruel and clear as day;

He snarled in gluttony and fear —  
"The wind blows dismally —  
Jesu in storm my lambs be near,  
By-by, lullay, lullie! "

And like a ravenous beast which sees  
The hunter's icy eye,  
So did this wretch in wrath confess  
Sweet Jesu's mastery.

Lightly he drew his greedy thumb  
From out that casement pale,  
And strode, enormous, swiftly home,  
Whinnying down the dale.

## DAME HICKORY

“DAME HICKORY, Dame Hickory,  
Here’s sticks for your fire,  
Furze-twigs, and oak-twigs,  
And beech-twigs, and briar!”  
But when old Dame Hickory came for to see,  
She found ’twas the voice of the False Faerie.

“Dame Hickory, Dame Hickory,  
Here’s meat for your broth,  
Goose-flesh, and hare’s flesh,  
And pig’s trotters both!”  
But when old Dame Hickory came for to see,  
She found ’twas the voice of the False Faerie.

“Dame Hickory, Dame Hickory,  
Here’s a wolf at your door,  
His teeth grinning white,  
And his tongue wagging sore!”  
“Nay!” said Dame Hickory, “ye False Faerie!  
But a wolf ’twas indeed, and famished was he.

“Dame Hickory, Dame Hickory,  
Here’s buds for your tomb,



## SONGS OF CHILDHOOD: 1901

Bramble, and lavender,  
And rosemary bloom! ”  
“ Wh-s-st! ” said Dame Hickory, “ ye False Faerie,  
Ye cry like a wolf, ye do, and trouble poor me.”

## THE PILGRIM

“SHALL we carry now your bundle,  
You old grey man?  
Over hill and dale and meadow  
Lighter than an owlet's shadow  
We will whirl it through the air,  
Through blue regions shrill and bare,  
So you may in comfort fare —  
Shall we carry now your bundle,  
You old grey man? ”

The Pilgrim lifted up his eyes  
And saw three fiends, in the skies,  
Stooping o'er that lonely place  
Evil in form and face.

“Nay,” he answered, “leave me, leave me,  
Ye three wild fiends!  
Far it is my feet must wander,  
And my city lieth yonder  
I must bear my bundle alone,  
Till the day be done.”  
The fiends stared down with leaden eye,  
Fanning the chill air duskily,  
’Twixt their hoods they stoop and cry: —

## SONGS OF CHILDHOOD: 1901

“ Shall we smooth the path before you,  
    You old grey man?  
Sprinkle it green with gilded showers,  
Strew it o’er with painted flowers,  
Lure bright birds to sing and flit  
In the honeyed airs of it?  
Shall we smooth the path before you,  
    Grey old man? ”

“ O, ’tis better silence, silence,  
    Ye three wild fiends!  
Footsore am I, faint and weary,  
Dark the way, forlorn and dreary,  
Beaten of wind, torn of briar,  
Smitten of rain, parched with fire:  
O, silence, silence, silence,  
    Ye three wild fiends! ”

It seemed a smoke obscured the air,  
Bright lightning quivered in the gloom,  
And a faint voice of thunder spake  
Far in the lone hill-hollows — “ Come! ”  
Then, half in fury, half in dread,  
The fiends drew closer down, and said:

“ Nay, thou stubborn fond old man,  
    Hearken awhile!  
Thorn, and dust, and ice and heat,  
Tarry now, sit down and eat:  
Heat, and ice, and dust and thorn;

## THE PILGRIM

Stricken, footsore, parched, forlorn —  
Juice of purple grape shall be  
Youth and solace unto thee.  
Music of tambour, wire and wind.  
Ease shall bring to heart and mind;  
Wonderful sweet mouths shall sigh  
Languishing and lullaby;  
Turn ther! Curse the dream that lures thee;  
Turn thee, ere too late it be,  
Lest thy three true friends grow weary  
Of comforting thee! ”

The Pilgrim crouches terrified  
As stooping hood, and glassy face,  
Gloating, evil, side by side,  
Terror and hate brood o’er the place;  
He flings his withered hands on high  
With a bitter, breaking cry: —  
“Leave me, leave me, leave me, leave me,  
Ye three wild fiends!  
If I lay me down in slumber,  
Then I lay me down in wrath;  
If I stir not in dark dreaming,  
Then I wither in my path;  
If I hear sweet voices singing,  
’Tis a demon’s lullaby:  
And, in ‘hideous storm and terror,’  
Wake but to die.”

## SONGS OF CHILDHOOD: 1901

And even as he spake, on high  
Arrows of sunlight pierced the sky.  
Bright streamed the rain. O'er burning snow  
From hill to hill a wondrous bow  
Of colour and fire trembled in air,  
Painting its heavenly beauty there.  
Wild flapped each fiend a batlike hood  
Against that 'frighting light, and stood  
Beating the windless rain, and then  
Rose heavy and slow with cowering head,  
Circled in company again,  
And into darkness fled.

Marvellous sweet it was to hear  
The waters gushing loud and clear;  
Marvellous happy it was to be  
Alone, and yet not solitary;  
Oh, out of terror and dark to come  
In sight of home!

## THE GAGE

“**LADY JANE**, O Lady Jane!  
Your hound hath broken bounds again,  
And chased my timorous deer, O;  
If him I see,  
That hour he'll dee;  
My brakes shall be his bier, O.”

“Hoots! lord, speak not so proud to me!  
My hound, I trow, is fleet and free,  
He's welcome to your deer, O;  
Shoot, shoot you may,  
He'll gang his way,  
Your threats we nothing fear, O.”

He's fetched him in, he's laid him low,  
Drips his lifeblood red and slow,  
Darkens his dreary eye, O;  
“Here is your beast,  
And now at least  
My herds in peace shall lie, O.”

“‘In peace!’ my lord, O mark me well!  
For what my jolly hound befell  
You shall sup twenty-fold, O!  
For every tooth  
Of his, in sooth,  
A stag in pawn, I hold, O.

SONGS OF CHILDHOOD: 1901

“ Huntsman and horn, huntsman and horn,  
Shall scour your heaths and coverts lorn,  
    Braying 'em shrill and clear, O;  
        But lone and still  
        Shall lift each hill,  
    Each valley wan and sere, O.

“ Ride up you may, ride down you may,  
Lonely or trooped, by night or day,  
    My hound shall haunt you ever:  
        Bird, beast, and game  
        Shall dread the same,  
    The wild fish of your river.”

Her cheek burns angry as the rose,  
Her eye with wrath and pity flows:  
    He gazes fierce and round, O —  
        “ Dear Lord! ” he says,  
        “ What loveliness  
    To waste upon a hound, O.

“ I'd give my stags, my hills and dales,  
My stormcocks and my nightingales  
    To have undone this deed, O;  
        For deep beneath  
        My heart is death  
    Which for her love doth bleed, O.”

He wanders up, he wanders down,  
On foot, a-horse, by night and noon:

## THE GAGE

His lands are bleak and drear, O;  
Forsook his dales  
Of nightingales,  
Forsook his moors of deer, O.

Forsook his heart, ah me! of mirth;  
There's nothing gladsome left on earth;  
All thoughts and dreams seem vain, O,  
Save where remote  
The moonbeams gloat,  
And sleeps the lovely Jane, O.

Until an even when lone he went,  
Gnawing his beard in dreariment —  
Lo! from a thicket hidden,  
Lovely as flower  
In April hour,  
Steps forth a form unbidden.

“Get ye now down, my lord, to me!  
I'm troubled so I'm like to dee,”  
She cries, 'twixt joy and grief, O;  
“The hound is dead,  
When all is said,  
But love is past belief, O.

“Nights, nights I've lain your lands to see,  
Forlorn and still — and all for me,  
All for a foolish curse, O;  
Now here am I



## SONGS OF CHILDHOOD: 1901

Come out to die —  
To live unloved is worse, O! ”

In faith, this lord, in that lone dale,  
Hears now a sweeter nightingale,  
And lairs a tenderer deer, O;  
His sorrow goes  
Like mountain snows  
In waters sweet and clear, O!

What ghostly hound is this that fleet  
Comes fawning to his mistress' feet,  
And courses round his master?  
How swiftly love  
May grief remove,  
How happy make disaster!

Now here he smells, now there he smells,  
Winding his voice along the dells,  
Till grey flows up the morn, O  
Then hies again  
To Lady Jane  
No longer now forlorn, O.

Ay, as it were a bud, did break  
To loveliness for her love's sake,  
So she in beauty moving  
Rides at his hand  
Across his land,  
Beloved as well as loving.

## AS LUCY WENT A-WALKING

AS Lucy went a-walking one morning cold and  
fine,  
There sate three crows upon a bough, and three  
times three is nine:  
Then "O!" said Lucy, in the snow, "it's very plain  
to see  
A witch has been a-walking in the fields in front of  
me."

Then stept she light and heedfully across the frozen  
snow,  
And plucked a bunch of elder-twigs that near a pool  
did grow:  
And, by and by, she comes to seven shadows in one  
place  
Stretched black by seven poplar-trees against the  
sun's bright face.

She looks to left, she looks to right, and in the  
midst she sees  
A little pool of water clear and frozen 'neath the  
trees;  
Then down beside its margent in the crusty snow  
she kneels,  
And hears a magic belfry a-ringing with sweet bells.

## SONGS OF CHILDHOOD: 1901

Clear sang the faint far merry peal, then silence on  
the air,  
And icy-still the frozen pool and poplars standing  
there:  
Then lo! as Lucy turned her head and looked along  
the snow  
She sees a witch — a witch she sees, come frisking  
to and fro.

Her scarlet, buckled shoes they clicked, her heels  
a-twinkling high;  
With mistletoe her steeple-hat bobbed as she capered  
by;  
But never a dint, or mark, or print, in the white-  
ness for to see,  
Though danced she high, though danced she fast,  
though danced she lissomely.

It seemed 'twas diamonds in the air, or little flakes  
of frost;  
It seemed 'twas golden smoke around, or sunbeams  
lightly tossed;  
It seemed an elfin music like to reeds and warblers  
rose:  
"Nay!" Lucy said, "it is the wind that through  
the branches flows."

And as she peeps, and as she peeps, 'tis no more  
one, but three,

## AS LUCY WENT A-WALKING

And eye of bat, and downy wing of owl within the  
tree,  
And the bells of that sweet belfry a-pealing as  
before,  
And now it is not three she sees, and now it is not  
four—

“O! who are ye,” sweet Lucy cries, “that in a  
dreadful ring,  
All muffled up in brindled shawls, do caper, frisk,  
and spring?”  
“A witch, and witches, one and nine,” they straight  
to her reply,  
And looked upon her narrowly, with green and  
needle eye.

Then Lucy sees in clouds of gold green cherry trees  
upgrow,  
And bushes of red roses that bloomed above the  
snow;  
She smells, all faint, the almond-boughs blowing  
so wild and fair,  
And doves with milky eyes ascend fluttering in the  
air.

Clear flowers she sees, like tulip buds, go floating  
by like birds,  
With wavering tips that warbled sweetly strange  
enchanted words;

## SONGS OF CHILDHOOD: 1901

And, as with ropes of amethyst, the boughs with  
lamps were hung,  
And clusters of green emeralds like fruit upon them  
clung.

“O witches nine, ye dreadful nine, O witches seven  
and three!

Whence come these wondrous things that I this  
Christmas morning see?”

But straight, as in a clap, when she of Christmas  
says the word,

Here is the snow, and there the sun, but never bloom  
nor bird;

Nor warbling flame, nor gloaming-rope of amethyst  
there shows,

Nor bunches of green emeralds, nor belfry, well,  
and rose,

Nor cloud of gold, nor cherry-tree, nor witch in  
brindled shawl,

But like a dream that vanishes, so vanished were  
they all.

When Lucy sees, and only sees three crows upon a  
bough,

And earthly twigs, and bushes hidden white in  
driven snow,

Then “O!” said Lucy, “three times three is nine —  
I plainly see

Some witch has been a-walking in the fields in  
front of me.”

## THE ENGLISHMAN

**I** MET a sailor in the woods,  
A silver ring wore he,  
His hair hung black, his eyes shone blue,  
And thus he said to me: —

“What country, say, of this round earth,  
What shore of what salt sea,  
Be this, my son, I wander in,  
And looks so strange to me? ”

Says I, “O foreign sailorman,  
In England now you be,  
This is her wood, and there her sky,  
And that her roaring sea.”

He lifts his voice yet louder,  
“What smell be this,” says he,  
“My nose on the sharp morning air  
Snuffs up so greedily? ”

Says I, “It is wild roses  
Do smell so winsomely,  
And winy briar, too,” says I,  
“That in these thickets be.”

## SONGS OF CHILDHOOD: 1901

"And oh!" says he, "what leetle bird  
Is singing in yon high tree,  
So every shrill and long-drawn note  
Like bubbles breaks in me?"

Says I, "It is the mavis  
That perches in the tree,  
And sings so shrill, and sings so sweet,  
When dawn comes up the sea."

At which he fell a-musing,  
And fixed his eye on me,  
As one alone 'twixt light and dark  
A spirit thinks to see.

"England!" he whispers soft and harsh,  
"England!" repeated he,  
"And briar, and rose, and mavis,  
A-singing in yon high tree.

"Ye speak me true, my leetle son,  
So — so, it came to me,  
A-drifting landwards on a spar,  
And grey dawn on the sea.

"Ay, ay, I could not be mistook;  
I knew them leafy trees,  
I knew that land so witchery sweet,  
And that old noise of seas.

## THE ENGLISHMAN

“ Though here I’ve sailed a score of years,  
And heard ’em, dream or wake,  
Lap small and hollow ’gainst my cheek,  
On sand and coral break; ”

“ ‘ Yet now,’ my leetle son, says I,  
A-drifting on the wave,  
‘ That land I see so safe and green,  
Is England, I believe.

“ ‘ And that there wood is English wood,  
And this here cruel sea,  
The selfsame old blue ocean  
Years gone remembers me.

“ ‘ A-sitting with my bread and butter  
Down ahind yon chitterin’ mill;  
And this same Marinere’— (that’s me),  
‘ Is that same leetle Will! —

“ ‘ That very same wee leetle Will  
Eating his bread and butter there,  
A-looking on the broad blue sea  
Betwixt his yaller hair! ’

“ And here be I, my son, thrown up  
Like corpses from the sea,  
Ships, stars, winds, tempests, pirates past,  
Yet leetle Will I be! ”



## SONGS OF CHILDHOOD: 1901

He said no more, that sailorman,  
But in a reverie  
Stared like the figure of a ship  
With painted eyes to sea.

## THE PHANTOM

“UPSTAIRS in the large closet, child,  
This side the blue room door,  
Is an old Bible, bound in leather,  
Standing upon the floor;

“Go with this taper, bring it me;  
Carry it so, upon your arm;  
It is the book on many a sea  
Hath stilled the waves’ alarm.”

Late the hour, dark the night,  
The house is solitary;  
Feeble is a taper’s light  
To light poor Ann to see.

Her eyes are yet with visions bright  
Of sylph and river, flower and fay,  
Now through a narrow corridor  
She goes her lonely way.

Vast shadows on the heedless walls  
Gigantic loom, stoop low:  
Each little hasty footfall calls  
Hollowly to and fro.

## SONGS OF CHILDHOOD: 1901

In the cold solitude her heart  
Remembers sorrowfully  
White winters when her mother was  
Her loving company.

Now in the dark clear glass she sees  
A taper, mocking hers, —  
A phantom face of light blue eyes,  
Reflecting phantom fears.

Around her loom the vacant rooms,  
Wind the upward stairs,  
She climbs on into a loneliness  
Only her taper shares.

Out in the dark a cold wind stirs,  
At every window sighs;  
A waning moon peers small and chill  
From out the cloudy skies,

Casting faint tracery on the walls;  
So stony still the house  
From cellar to attic rings the shrill  
Squeak of the hungry mouse.

Her grandmother is deaf with age;  
A garden of moonless trees  
Would answer not though she should cry  
In anguish on her knees.

## THE PHANTOM

So that she scarce can breathe — so fast  
Her pent up heart doth beat —  
When, faint along the corridor,  
Falleth the sound of feet. —

Sounds lighter than silk slippers make  
Upon a ballroom floor, when sweet  
Violin and 'cello wake  
Music for twirling feet.

O! 'neath an old unfriendly roof,  
What shapes may not conceal  
Their faces in the open day,  
At night abroad to steal?

Even her taper seems with fear  
To languish small and blue;  
Far in the woods the winter wind  
Runs whistling through.

A dreadful cold plucks at each hair,  
Her mouth is stretched to cry,  
But sudden, with a gush of joy,  
It narrows to a sigh.

It is a phantom child which comes  
Soft through the corridor,  
Singing an old forgotten song,  
This ancient burden bore: —

## SONGS OF CHILDHOOD: 1901

“Thorn, thorn, I wis,  
And roses twain,  
    A red rose and a white,  
Stoop in the blossom, bee, and kiss  
    A lonely child good-night.

“Swim fish, sing bird,  
And sigh again,  
    I that am lost am lone,  
Bee in the blossom never stirred  
    Locks hid beneath a stone! ”—

Her eye was of the azure fire  
    That hovers in wintry flame;  
Her raiment wild and yellow as furze  
    That spouteth out the same;

And in her hand she bore no flower,  
    But on her head a wreath  
Of faded flowers that did yet  
    Smell sweetly after death. . . .

Gloomy with night the listening walls  
    Are now that she is gone,  
Albeit this solitary child  
    No longer seems alone.

Fast though her taper dwindles down,  
    Heavy and thick the tome,

## THE PHANTOM

A beauty beyond fear to dim  
Haunts now her alien home.

Ghosts in the world, malignant, grim,  
Vex many a wood and glen,  
And house and pool — the unquiet ghosts  
Of dead and restless men.

But in her grannie's house this spirit —  
A child as lone as she —  
Pining for love not found on earth,  
Ann dreams again to see.

Seated upon her tapestry stool,  
Her fairy-book laid by,  
She gazes into the fire, knowing  
She has sweet company.

## THE MILLER AND HIS SON

**A** TWANGLING harp for Mary,  
A silvery flute for John,  
And now we'll play, the livelong day,  
"The Miller and his Son." . . .

"The Miller went a-walking  
All in the forest high,  
He sees three doves a-flitting  
Against the dark blue sky:

"Says he, 'My son, now follow  
These doves so white and free,  
That cry above the forest,  
And surely cry to thee.'

"I go, my dearest Father,  
But O! I sadly fear,  
These doves so white will lead me far,  
But never bring me near.'

"He kisses the Miller,  
He cries, 'Awhoop to ye!'  
And straightway through the forest  
Follows the wood-doves three.

## THE MILLER AND HIS SON

“There came a sound of weeping  
To the Miller in his Mill:  
Red roses in a thicket  
Bloomed over near his wheel;

“Three stars shone wild and brightly  
Above the forest dim:  
But never his dearest son  
Returns again to him.

“The cuckoo shall call ‘Cuckoo!’  
In vain along the vale —  
The linnet, and the blackbird,  
The mournful nightingale;

“The Miller hears and sees not,  
Thinking of his son;  
His toppling wheel is silent;  
His grinding done.

“‘You doves so white,’ he weepeth,  
‘You roses on the tree,  
You stars that shine so brightly,  
You shine in vain for me!

“‘I bade him follow, follow!’  
He said, ‘O Father dear,  
These doves so white will lead me far  
But never bring me near.’” . . .



## **SONGS OF CHILDHOOD: 1901**

**A twangling harp for Mary,  
A silvery flute for John,  
And now we'll play, the livelong day,  
"The Miller and his Son."**

## DOWN-ADOWN-DERRY

**D**OWN-adown-derry,  
Sweet Annie Maroon,  
Gathering daisies  
In the meadows of Doone,  
Hears a shrill piping,  
Elflike and free,  
Where the waters go brawling  
In rills to the sea;  
Singing down-adown-derry.

Down-adown-derry,  
Sweet Annie Maroon,  
Through the green grasses  
Peeps softly; and soon  
Spies under green willows  
A fairy whose song  
Like the smallest of bubbles  
Floats bobbing along;  
Singing down-adown-derry.

Down-adown-derry,  
Her cheeks were like wine,  
Her eyes in her wee face  
Like water-sparks shine,

## SONGS OF CHILDHOOD: 1901

Her niminy fingers  
Her sleep tresses preen,  
The which in the combing  
She peeps out between;  
Singing down-adown-derry.

Down-adown-derry,  
Shrill, shrill was her tune: —  
“Come to my water-house,  
Annie Maroon:  
Come in your dimity,  
Ribbon on head,  
To wear siller seaweed  
And coral instead ”;  
Singing down-adown-derry.

“Down-adown-derry,  
Lean fish of the sea,  
Bring lanthorns for feasting  
The gay Faërie;  
’Tis sand for the dancing,  
A music all sweet  
In the water-green gloaming  
For thistledown feet ”;  
Singing down-adown-derry.

Down-adown-derry,  
Sweet Annie Maroon  
Looked large on the fairy  
Curled wan as the moon;

## DOWN-ADOWN-DERRY

And all the grey ripples  
To the Mill racing by,  
With harps and with timbrels  
Did ringing reply;  
Singing down adown-derry.

“Down-adown-derry,”  
Sang the Fairy of Doone,  
Piercing the heart  
Of sweet Annie Maroon;  
And lo! when like roses  
The clouds of the sun  
Faded at dusk, gone  
Was Annie Maroon;  
Singing down-adown-derry.

Down-adown-derry,  
The daisies are few;  
Frost twinkles powdery  
In haunts of the dew;  
And only the robin  
Perched on a thorn,  
Can comfort the heart  
Of a father forlorn;  
Singing down-adown-derry.

Down-adown-derry,  
There's snow in the air;  
Ice where the lily  
Bloomed waxen and fair;

**SONGS OF CHILDHOOD: 1901**

**He may call o'er the water,  
Cry — cry through the Mill,  
But Annie Maroon, alas!  
Answer ne'er will;  
Singing down-adown-derry.**

## THE SUPPER

**A** WOLF he pricks with eyes of fire  
Across the night's o'ercrusted snows.

    Seeking his prey,  
    He pads his way  
Where Jane benighted goes,  
    Where Jane benighted goes.

He curdles the bleak air with ire,  
Ruffling his hoary raiment through,

    And lo! he sees  
    Beneath the trees  
Where Jane's light footsteps go,  
    Where Jane's light footsteps go.

No hound peals thus in wicked joy,  
He snaps his muzzle in the snows,

    His five-clawed feet  
    Do scamper fleet  
Where Jane's bright lanthorn shows,  
    Where Jane's bright lanthorn shows.

Now his greed's green doth gaze unseen  
On a pure face of wilding rose,  
    Her amber eyes

## SONGS OF CHILDHOOD: 1901

In fear's surprise  
Watch largely as she goes,  
    Watch largely as she goes.

Salt wells his hunger in his jaws,  
His lust it revels to and fro,  
    Yet small beneath  
    A soft voice saith,  
"Jane shall in safety go,  
    Jane shall in safety go."

He lurched as if a fiery lash  
Had scourged his hide, and through and through  
    His furious eyes  
    O'erscanned the skies,  
But nearer dared not go,  
    But nearer dared not go.

He reared like wild Bucephalus,  
His fangs like spears in him uprose,  
    Even to the town  
    Jane's flitting gown  
He grins on as she goes,  
    He grins on as she goes.

In fierce lament he howls amain,  
He scampers, marvelling in his throes  
    What brought him there  
    To sup on air,  
While Jane unharmèd goes,  
    While Jane unharmèd goes.

## THE ISLE OF LONE

THREE dwarfs there were which lived in an isle,  
And the name of that Isle was Lone,  
And the names of the dwarfs were Alliolye,  
Lallerie, Muziomone.

Alliolye was green of een,  
Lallerie light of locks,  
Muziomone was mild of mien,  
As ewes in April flocks.

Their house was small and sweet of the sea,  
And pale as the Malmsey wine;  
Their bowls were three, and their beds were three,  
And their nightcaps white were nine.

Their beds they were made of the holly-wood,  
Their combs of the tortoise's shell,  
Three basins of silver in corners there stood,  
And three little ewers as well.

Green rushes, green rushes lay thick on the floor,  
For light beamed a gobbet of wax;  
There were three wooden stools for whatever they  
wore  
On their humpity-dumpity backs.



## SONGS OF CHILDHOOD: 1901

So each would lie on a drowsy pillow  
And watch the moon in the sky —  
And hear the parrot scream to the billow,  
The billow roar reply:

Parrots of sapphire and sulphur and amber,  
Scarlet, and flame, and green,  
While five-foot apes did scramble and clamber,  
In the feathery-tufted treen.

All night long with bubbles a-glisten  
The ocean cried under the moon,  
Till ape and parrot, too sleepy to listen,  
To sleep and slumber were gone.

Then from three small beds the dark hours' while  
In a house in the Island of Lone  
Rose the snoring of Lallerie, Alliolyle,  
The snoring of Muziomone.

But soon as ever came peep of sun  
On coral and feathery tree,  
Three night-capped dwarfs to the surf would run  
And soon were a-bob in the sea.

At six they went fishing, at nine they snared  
Young foxes in the dells,  
At noon on sweet berries and honey they fared,  
And blew in their twisted shells.

## THE ISLE OF LONE

Dark was the sea they gambolled in,  
And thick with silver fish,  
Dark as green glass blown clear and thin  
To be a monarch's dish.

They sate to sup in a jasmine bower,  
Lit pale with flies of fire,  
Their bowls the hue of the iris-flower,  
And lemon their attire.

Sweet wine in little cups they sipped,  
And golden honeycomb  
Into their bowls of cream they dipped,  
Whipt light and white as foam.

Now Alliolyle, where the sand-flower blows,  
Taught three old apes to sing —  
Taught three old apes to dance on their toes  
And caper around in a ring.

They yelled them hoarse and they croaked them  
sweet,  
They twirled them about and around,  
To the noise of their voices they danced with their  
feet,  
They stamped with their feet on the ground.

But down to the shore skipped Lallerie,  
His parrot on his thumb,

## SONGS OF CHILDHOOD: 1901

And the twain they scritch'd in mockery, ..  
While the dancers go and come.

And, alas! in the evening, rosy and still,  
Light-haired Lallerie  
Bitterly quarrelled with Alliolyle  
By the yellow-sanded sea.

The rising moon swam sweet and large  
Before their furious eyes,  
And they rolled and rolled to the coral marge  
Where the surf for ever cries.

Too late, too late, comes Muziomone:  
Clear in the clear green sea  
Alliolyle lies not alone,  
But clasped with Lallerie.

He blows on his shell plaintiff notes;  
Ape, parraquito, bee  
Flock where a shoe on the salt wave floats,—  
The shoe of Lallerie.

He fetches nightcaps, one and nine,  
Grey apes he dowers three,  
His house as fair as the Malmsey wine  
Seems sad as cypress-tree.

Three bowls he brims with sweet honeycomb  
To feast the bumble bees,

## THE ISLE OF LONE

Saying, "O bees, be this your home,  
For grief is on the seas!"

He sate him lone in a coral grot,  
At the flowing in of the tide;  
When ebb'd the billow, there was not,  
Save coral, aught beside.

So hairy apes in three white beds,  
And nightcaps, one and nine,  
On moonlit pillows lay three heads  
Bemused with dwarfish wine.

A tomb of coral, the dirge of bee,  
The grey apes' guttural groan  
For Alliolyle, for Lallerie,  
For thee, O Muziomone!

## SLEEPING BEAUTY

THE scent of bramble fills the air,  
Amid her folded sheets she lies,  
The gold of evening in her hair,  
The blue of morn shut in her eyes.

How many a changing moon hath lit  
The unchanging roses of her face!  
Her mirror ever broods on it  
In silver stillness of the days.

Oft flits the moth on filmy wings  
Into his solitary lair;  
Shrill evensong the cricket sings  
From some still shadow in her hair.

In heat, in snow, in wind, in flood,  
She sleeps in lovely loneliness,  
Half-folded like an April bud  
On winter-haunted trees.

## THE HORN

**H**ARK! is that a horn I hear,  
In cloudland winding sweet —  
And bell-like clash of bridle-rein,  
And silver-shod light feet?

Is it the elfin laughter  
Of fairies riding faint and high,  
Beneath the branches of the moon,  
Straying through the starry sky?

Is it in the globèd dew  
Such sweet melodies may fall?  
Wood and valley — all are still,  
Hushed the shepherd's call.

## CAPTAIN LEAN

**O**UT of the East a hurricane  
Swept down on Captain Lean —  
That mariner and gentleman  
Will never again be seen.

He sailed his ship against the foes  
Of his own country dear,  
But now in the trough of the billows  
An aimless course doth steer.

Powder was violets to his nostrils,  
Sweet the din of the fighting-line,  
Now he is flotsam on the seas,  
And his bones are bleached with brine.

The stars move up along the sky, ·  
The moon she shines so bright,  
And in that solitude the foam  
Sparkles unearthly white.

This is the tomb of Captain Lean,  
Would a straiter please his soul?  
I trow he sleeps in peace,  
Howsoever the billows roll!

## THE PORTRAIT OF A WARRIOR

**HIS** brow is seamed with line and scar;  
His cheek is red and dark as wine;  
The fires as of a Northern star  
Beneath his cap of sable shine.

His right hand, bared of leathern glove,  
Hangs open like an iron gin,  
You stoop to see his pulses move,  
To hear the blood sweep out and in.

He looks some king, so solitary  
In earnest thought he seems to stand,  
As if across a lonely sea  
He gazed impatient of the land.

Out of the noisy centuries  
The foolish and the fearful fade;  
Yet burn unquenched these warrior eyes,  
Time hath not dimmed, nor death dismayed.



## HAUNTED

FROM out the wood I watched them shine,—  
The windows of the haunted house,  
Now ruddy as enchanted wine,  
Now dark as flittermouse.

There went a thin voice piping airs  
Along the grey and crooked walks,—  
A garden of thistledown and tares,  
Bright leaves, and giant stalks.

The twilight rain shone at its gates,  
Where long-leaved grass in shadow grew;  
And black in silence to her mates  
A voiceless raven flew.

Lichen and moss the lone stones greened,  
Green paths led lightly to its door,  
Keen from her hair the spider leaned,  
And dusk to darkness wore.

Amidst the sedge a whisper ran,  
The West shut down a heavy eye,  
And like last tapers, few and wan,  
The watch-stars kindled in the sky.

## THE RAVEN'S TOMB

**"B**UILD me my tomb," the Raven said,  
    "Within the dark yew-tree,  
So in the Autumn yewberries  
    Sad lamps may burn for me.  
Summon the haunted beetle,  
    From twilight bud and bloom,  
To drone a gloomy dirge for me  
    At dusk above my tomb.  
Beseech ye too the glowworm  
    To rear her cloudy flame,  
Where the small, flickering bats resort,  
    Whistling in tears my name.  
Let the round dew a whisper make,  
    Welling on twig and thorn;  
And only the grey cock at night  
    Call through his silver horn.  
And you, dear sisters, don your black  
    For ever and a day,  
To show how true a raven  
    In his tomb is laid away."

## THE CHRISTENING

**T**HE bells chime clear,  
Soon will the sun behind the hills sink down;  
Come, little Ann, your baby brother dear  
Lies in his christening-gown.

His godparents,  
Are all across the fields stepped on before,  
And wait beneath the crumbling monuments,  
This side the old church door.

Your mammie dear  
Leans frail and lovely on your daddie's arm;  
Watching her chick, 'twixt happiness and fear,  
Lest he should come to harm.

All to be blest  
Full soon in the clear heavenly water, he  
Sleeps on unwitting of it, his little breast  
Heaving so tenderly.

I carried you,  
My little Ann, long since on this same quest,  
And from the painted windows a pale hue  
Lit golden on your breast;

## THE CHRISTENING

And then you woke,  
Chill as the holy water trickled down,  
And, weeping, cast the window a strange look,  
Half smile, half infant frown.

I scarce could hear  
The shrill larks singing in the green meadows,  
'Twas summertide, and, budding far and near,  
The hedges thick with rose.

And now you're grown  
A little girl, and this same helpless mite  
Is come like such another bud half-grown,  
Out of the wintry night.

Time flies, time flies!  
And yet, bless me! 'tis little changed am I;  
May Jesu keep from tears those infant eyes,  
Be love their lullaby!

## THE FUNERAL

THEY dressed us up in black,  
Susan and Tom and me —  
And, walking through the fields  
All beautiful to see,  
With branches high in the air  
And daisy and buttercup,  
We heard the lark in the clouds —  
In black dressed up.

They took us to the graves,  
Susan and Tom and me,  
Where the long grasses grow  
And the funeral tree:  
We stood and watched; and the wind  
Came softly out of the sky  
And blew in Susan's hair,  
. As I stood close by.

Back through the fields we came,  
Tom and Susan and me,  
And we sat in the nursery together,  
And had our tea.  
And, looking out of the window,  
I heard the thrushes sing;  
But Tom fell asleep in his chair,  
He was so tired, poor thing.

## THE MOTHER BIRD

**T**HROUGH the green twilight of a hedge  
I peered, with cheek on the cool leaves pressed,  
And spied a bird upon a nest:  
Two eyes she had beseeching me  
Meekly and brave, and her brown breast  
Throbbled hot and quick above her heart;  
And then she opened her dagger bill,—  
'Twas not a chirp, as sparrows pipe  
At break of day; 'twas not a trill,  
As falters through the quiet even;  
But one sharp solitary note,  
One desperate, fierce, and vivid cry  
Of valiant tears, and hopeless joy,  
One passionate note of victory;  
Off, like a fool afraid, I sneaked,  
Smiling the smile the fool smiles best,  
At the mother bird in the secret hedge  
Patient upon her lonely nest.

## THE CHILD IN THE STORY GOES TO BED

**I** PRYTHER, Nurse, come smooth my hair,  
And prythee, Nurse, unloose my shoe,  
And trimly turn my silken sheet  
Upon my quilt of gentle blue.

My pillow sweet of lavender  
Smooth with an amiable hand,  
And may the dark pass peacefully by  
As in the hour-glass droops the sand.

Prepare my cornered manchet sweet,  
And in my little crystal cup  
Pour out the blithe and flowering mead  
That forthwith I may sup.

Withdraw my curtains from the night,  
And let the crispèd crescent shine  
Upon my eyelids while I sleep,  
And soothe me with her beams benign.

Dark looks the forest far-away;  
O, listen! through its empty dales  
Rings from the solemn echoing boughs  
The music of its nightingales.

## THE CHILD IN THE STORY GOES TO BED

Now quench my silver lamp, prythee,  
And bid the harpers harp that tune  
Fairies which haunt the meadowlands  
Sing clearly to the stars of June.

And bid them play, though I in dreams  
No longer heed their pining strains,  
For I would not to silence wake  
When slumber o'er my senses wanes.

You Angels bright who me defend,  
Enshadow me with curvèd wing,  
And keep me in the darksome night  
Till dawn another day do bring.



## THE LAMPLIGHTER

**W**HEN the light of day declines,  
And a swift angel through the sky  
Kindles God's tapers clear,  
With ashen staff the lamplighter  
Passes along the darkling streets  
To light our earthly lamps;

Lest, prowling in the darkness,  
The thief should haunt with quiet tread,  
Or men on evil errands set;  
Or wayfarers be benighted;  
Or neighbors, bent from house to house,  
Should need a guiding torch.

He is like a needlewoman  
Who deftly on a sable hem  
Stitches in gleaming jewels;  
Or, haply, he is like a hero,  
Whose bright deeds on the long journey  
Are beacons on our way.

And when in the East comes morning,  
And the broad splendour of the sun,  
Then, with the tune of little birds

## THE LAMPLIGHTER

Rings on high, the lamplighter  
Passes by each quiet house,  
And he puts out the lamps.

## I MET AT EVE

**I** MET at eve the Prince of Sleep,  
His was a still and lovely face,  
He wandered through a valley steep,  
Lovely in a lonely place.

His garb was grey of lavender,  
About his brows a poppy-wreath  
Burned like dim coals, and everywhere  
The air was sweeter for his breath.

His twilight feet no sandals wore,  
His eyes shone faint in their own flame,  
Fair moths that gloomed his steps before  
Seemed letters of his lovely name.

His house is in the mountain ways,  
A phantom house of misty walls,  
Whose golden flocks at evening graze,  
And witch the moon with muffled calls.

Upwelling from his shadowy springs  
Sweet waters shake a trembling sound,  
There flit the hoot-owl's silent wings,  
There hath his web the silkworm wound.

## **I MET AT EVE**

**Dark in his pools clear visions lurk,  
And rosy, as with morning buds,  
Along his dales of broom and birk  
Dreams haunt his solitary woods.**

**I met at eve the Prince of Sleep,  
His was a still and lovely face,  
He wandered through a valley steep,  
Lovely in a lonely place.**

## LULLABY

**S**LEEP, sleep, lovely white soul;  
The little mouse cheeps plaintively,  
The night-bird in the chestnut-tree —  
They sing together, bird and mouse,  
In starlight, in darkness, lonely, sweet,  
The wild notes and the faint notes meet —  
Sleep, sleep, lovely white soul.

Sleep, sleep, lovely white soul;  
Amid the lilies floats the moth,  
The mole along his galleries goeth  
In the dark earth; the summer moon  
Looks like a shepherd through the pane  
Seeking his feeble lamp again —  
Sleep, sleep, lovely white soul.

Sleep, sleep, lovely white soul;  
Time comes to keep night-watch with thee,  
Nodding with roses; and the sea  
Saith "Peace! Peace!" amid his foam.  
"O be still!"  
The wind cries up the whispering hill —  
Sleep, sleep, lovely white soul.

## ENVOI

**C**HILD, do you love the flower  
Ashine with colour and dew  
Lighting its transient hour?  
So I love you.

The lambs in the mead are at play,  
'Neath a hurdle the shepherd's asleep;  
From height to height of the day  
The sunbeams sweep.

Evening will come. And alone  
The dreamer the dark will beguile;  
All the world will be gone  
For a dream's brief while.

Then I shall be old; and away:  
And you, with sad joy in your eyes,  
Will brood over children at play  
With as loveful surmise.



**PEACOCK PIE**  
**A BOOK OF RHYMES**





**UP AND DOWN**



## THE HORSEMAN

**I** HEARD a horseman  
Ride over the hill;  
The moon shone clear,  
The night was still;  
His helm was silver,  
And pale was he;  
And the horse he rode  
Was of ivory.

## MRS. EARTH

**M**RS. EARTH makes silver black,

Mrs. Earth makes iron red,

But Mrs. Earth can not stain gold,

Nor ruby red.

Mrs. Earth the slenderest bone

Whitens in her bosom cold,

But Mrs. Earth can change my dreams

No more than ruby or gold.

Mrs. Earth and Mr. Sun

Can tan my skin, and tire my toes,

But all that I'm thinking of, ever shall think,

Why, neither knows.

## ALAS, ALACK!

ANN, Ann!

Come! quick as you can!

There's a fish that *talks*

In the frying-pan.

Out of the fat,

As clear as glass,

He put up his mouth

And moaned "Alas!"

Oh, most mournful,

"Alas, alack!"

Then turned to his sizzling,

And sank him back.

## TIRED TIM

**P**oor tired Tim! It's sad for him.  
He lags the long bright morning through,  
Ever so tired of nothing to do;  
He moons and mopes the livelong day,  
Nothing to think about, nothing to say;  
Up to bed with his candle to creep,  
Too tired to yawn, too tired to sleep:  
Poor tired Tim! It's sad for him

## MIMA

**J**EMIMA is my name,  
But oh, I have another:  
My father always calls me Meg,  
And so do Bob and mother;  
Only my sister, jealous of  
The strands of my bright hair,  
“Jemima — Mima — Mima!”  
Calls, mocking, up the stair.



## THE HUNTSMEN

**T**HREE jolly gentlemen,  
In coats of red,  
Rode their horses  
Up to bed.

Three jolly gentlemen  
Snored till morn,  
Their horses champing  
The golden corn.

Three jolly gentlemen,  
At break of day,  
Came clitter-clatter down the stairs  
And galloped away.

## THE BANDOG

**H**AS anybody seen my Mopser? —

A comely dog is he,

With hair of the colour of a Charles the Fifth

And teeth like ships at sea,

His tail it curls straight upwards,

His ears stand two abreast,

And he answers to the simple name of Mopser,

When civilly addressed.

## I CAN'T ABEAR

**I** CAN'T abear a butcher,  
I can't abide his meat,  
The ugliest shop of all is his,  
The ugliest in the street;  
Bakers' are warm, cobblers' dark,  
Chemists' burn watery lights;  
But oh, the sawdust butcher's shop,  
That ugliest of sights!

## THE DUNCE

WHY does he still keep ticking?

Why does his round white face  
Stare at me over the books and ink,  
And mock at my disgrace?

Why does that thrush call, "Dunce, dunce,  
dunce! "?

Why does that bluebottle buzz?  
Why does the sun so silent shine? —  
And what do I care if it does?

## CHICKEN

**C**LAPPING her platter stood plump Bess,  
And all across the green  
Came scampering in, on wing and claw,  
Chicken fat and lean: —  
Dorking, Spaniard, Cochin China,  
Bantams sleek and small,  
Like feathers blown in a great wind,  
They came at Bessie's call.

## SOME ONE

**SOME** one came knocking  
At my wee, small door;  
Some one came knocking,  
I'm sure — sure — sure;  
I listened, I opened,  
I looked to left and right,  
But nought there was a-stirring  
In the still dark night;  
Only the busy beetle  
Tap-tapping in the wall,  
Only from the forest  
The screech-owl's call,  
Only the cricket whistling  
While the dewdrops fall,  
So I know not who came knocking,  
At all, at all, at all.

## BREAD AND CHERRIES

**“CHERRIES, ripe cherries! ”**

The old woman cried,  
In her snowy white apron,  
And basket beside;  
And the little boys came,  
Eyes shining, cheeks red,  
To buy bags of cherries  
To eat with their bread.

## OLD SHELLOVER

**"COME!"** said Old Shellover.

**"What?"** says Creep.

**"The horny old Gardener's fast asleep;**

**The fat cock Thrush**

**To his nest has gone,**

**And the dew shines bright**

**In the rising Moon;**

**Old Sallie Worm from her hole doth peep;**

**Come!"** said Old Shellover.

**"Ay!"** said Creep.



## HAPLESS

**H**APLESS, hapless, I must be  
All the hours of life I see,  
Since my foolish nurse did once  
Bed me on her leggen bones;  
Since my mother did not weel  
To snip my nails with blades of steel.  
Had they laid me on a pillow  
In a cot of water willow,  
Had they bitten finger and thumb,  
Not to such ill hap I had come.

## THE LITTLE BIRD

**M**Y dear Daddie bought a mansion  
For to bring my Mammie to,  
In a hat with a long feather,  
And a trailing gown of blue;  
And a company of fiddlers  
And a rout of maids and men  
Danced the clock round to the morning,  
In a gay house-warming then.  
And when all the guests were gone, and  
All was still as still can be,  
In from the dark ivy hopped a  
Wee small bird: and that was Me.

## CAKE AND SACK

**O**LD King Caraway  
Supped on cake,  
And a cup of sack  
His thirst to slake;  
Bird in arras  
And hound in hall  
Watched very softly  
Or not at all;  
Fire in the middle,  
Stone all round  
Changed not, heeded not,  
Made no sound;  
All by himself  
At the Table High  
He'd nibble and sip  
While his dreams slipped by;  
And when he had finished,  
He'd nod and say,  
"Cake and sack  
For King Caraway!"

## THE SHIP OF RIO

**T**H**ERE** was a ship of Rio  
Sailed out into the blue,  
And nine and ninety monkeys  
Were all her jovial crew.  
From bos'un to the cabin boy,  
From quarter to caboose,  
There weren't a stitch of calico  
To breech 'em — tight or loose;  
From spar to deck, from deck to keel,  
From barnacle to shroud,  
There weren't one pair of reach-me-downs  
To all that jabbering crowd.  
But wasn't it a gladsome sight,  
When roared the deep-sea gales,  
To see them reef her fore and aft,  
A-swinging by their tails!  
Oh, wasn't it a gladsome sight,  
When glassy calm did come,  
To see them squatting tailor-wise  
Around a keg of rum!  
Oh, wasn't it a gladsome sight,  
When in she sailed to land,  
To see them all a-scampering skip  
For nuts across the sand!

## JIM JAY

Do diddle di do,  
    Poor Jim Jay  
Got stuck fast  
    In Yesterday.  
Squinting he was,  
    On cross-legs bent,  
Never heeding  
    The wind was spent.  
Round veered the weathercock,  
    The sun drew in —  
And stuck was Jim  
    Like a rusty pin. . . .  
We pulled and we pulled  
    From seven till twelve,  
Jim, too frightened  
    To help himself.  
But all in vain.  
    The clock struck one,  
And there was Jim  
    A little bit gone.  
At half-past five  
    You scarce could see  
A glimpse of his flapping  
    Handkerchee.

## **JIM JAY**

**And when came noon,  
And we climbed sky-high,  
Jim was a speck  
Slip-slipping by.  
Come tomorrow,  
The neighbours say,  
He'll be past crying for;  
Poor Jim Jay.**

## MISS T.

**I**T'S a very odd thing —  
As odd as can be —  
That whatever Miss T. eats  
Turns into Miss T.;  
Porridge and apples,  
Mince, muffins and mutton,  
Jam, junket, jumbles —  
Not a rap, not a button  
It matters; the moment  
They're out of her plate,  
Though shared by Miss Butcher  
And sour Mr. Bate;  
Tiny and cheerful,  
And neat as can be,  
Whatever Miss T. eats  
Turns into Miss T.

## THE CUPBOARD

**I** KNOW a little cupboard,  
    With a teeny tiny key,  
And there's a jar of Lollypops  
    For me, me, me.

It has a little shelf, my dear,  
    As dark as dark can be,  
And there's a dish of Banbury Cakes  
    For me, me, me.

I have a small fat grandmamma,  
    With a very slippery knee,  
And she's Keeper of the Cupboard,  
    With a key, key, key.

And when I'm very good, my dear,  
    As good as good can be,  
There's Banbury Cakes, and Lollypops  
    For me, me, me.



## THE BARBER'S

**G**OLD locks, and black locks,  
Red locks and brown,  
Topknot to love-curl  
The hair wisps down;  
Straight above the clear eyes,  
Rounded round the ears,  
Snip-snap and snick-a-snick,  
Clash the Barber's shears;  
Us, in the looking-glass,  
Footsteps in the street,  
Over, under, to and fro,  
The lean blades meet;  
Bay Rum or Bear's Grease,  
A silver groat to pay —  
Then out a-shin-shan-shining  
In the bright, blue day.

## HIDE AND SEEK

**H**IDE and seek, says the Wind,  
In the shade of the woods;  
Hide and seek, says the Moon,  
To the hazel buds;  
Hide and seek, says the Cloud,  
Star on to star;  
Hide and seek, says the Wave  
At the harbour bar;  
Hide and seek, say I  
To myself, and step  
Out of the dream of Wake  
Into the dream of Sleep.



## BOYS AND GIRLS



## THEN

**T**WENTY, forty, sixty, eighty,  
A hundred years ago,  
All through the night with lantern bright  
The Watch trudged to and fro.  
And little boys tucked snug abed  
Would wake from dreams to hear —  
“Two o’ the morning by the clock,  
And the stars a-shining clear!”  
Or, when across the chimney-tops  
Screamed shrill a North-east gale,  
A faint and shaken voice would shout,  
“Three! and a storm of hail!”

## THE WINDOW

**B**EHIND the blinds I sit and watch  
The people passing — passing by;  
And not a single one can see  
My tiny watching eye.

They cannot see my little room,  
All yellowed with the shaded sun;  
They do not even know I am here;  
Nor will guess when I am gone.

## POOR HENRY

**T**HICK in its glass  
The physic stands.  
Poor Henry lifts  
Distracted hands;  
His round cheek wans  
In the candlelight,  
To smell that smell!  
To see that sight!

Finger and thumb  
Clinch his small nose,  
A gurgle, a gasp,  
And down it goes;  
Scowls Henry now;  
But mark that cheek,  
Sleek with the bloom  
Of health next week!



## FULL MOON

**O**NE night as Dick lay half asleep,  
Into his drowsy eyes  
A great still light began to creep  
From out the silent skies.

It was the lovely moon's, for when  
He raised his dreamy head,  
Her surge of silver filled the pane  
And streamed across his bed.

So, for awhile, each gazed at each —  
Dick and the solemn moon —  
Till, climbing slowly on her way,  
She vanished, and was gone.

## THE BOOKWORM

"I'M tired — Oh, tired of books," said Jack,  
    "I long for meadows green,  
And woods where shadowy violets  
    Nod their cool leaves between;  
I long to see the ploughman stride  
    His darkening acres o'er,  
To hear the hoarse sea-waters drive  
    Their billows 'gainst the shore;  
I long to watch the sea-mew wheel  
    Back to her rock-perched mate;  
Or, where the breathing cows are housed,  
    Lean dreaming o'er the gate.  
Something has gone, and ink and print  
    Will never bring it back;  
I long for the green fields again,  
    I'm tired of books," said Jack.

## THE QUARTETTE

**T**OM sang for joy and Ned sang for joy and old  
Sam sang for joy;  
All we four boys piped up loud, just like one boy;  
And the ladies that sate with the Squire — their  
cheeks were all wet,  
For the noise of the voice of us boys, when we sang  
our Quartette.

Tom he piped low and Ned he piped low and Sam  
he piped low;  
Into a sorrowful fall did our music flow;  
And the ladies that sate with the Squire vowed  
they'd never forget  
How the eyes of them cried for delight, when we  
sang our Quartette.

## MISTLETOE

**S**ITTING under the mistletoe  
(Pale-green, fairy mistletoe),  
One last candle burning low,  
All the sleepy dancers gone,  
Just one candle burning on,  
Shadows lurking everywhere:  
Some one came, and kissed me there.

Tired I was; my head would go  
Nodding under the mistletoe  
(Pale-green, fairy mistletoe),  
No footsteps came, no voice, but only,  
Just as I sat there, sleepy, lonely,  
Stooped in the still and shadowy air  
Lips unseen — and kissed me there.

## THE LOST SHOE

POOR little Lucy  
By some mischance,  
Lost her shoe  
As she did dance:  
'Twas not on the stairs,  
Not in the hall;  
Not where they sat  
At supper at all.  
She looked in the garden,  
But there it was not;  
Henhouse, or kennel,  
Or high dovecote.  
Dairy and meadow,  
And wild woods through  
Showed not a trace  
Of Lucy's shoe.  
Bird nor bunny  
Nor glimmering moon  
Breathed a whisper  
Of where 'twas gone.  
It was cried and cried,  
Oyez and Oyez!  
In French, Dutch, Latin,  
And Portuguese.

## THE LOST SHOE

Ships the dark seas  
Went plunging through,  
But none brought news  
Of Lucy's shoe;  
And still she patters  
In silk and leather,  
O'er snow, sand, shingle,  
In every weather;  
Spain, and Africa,  
Hindustan,  
Java, China,  
And lapped Japan;  
Plain and desert,  
She hops --- hops through,  
Pernambuco  
To gold Peru;  
Mountain and forest,  
And river too,  
All the world over  
For her lost shoe.

## THE TRUANTS

**E**RE my heart beats too coldly and faintly  
To remember sad things, yet be gay,  
I would sing a brief song of the world's little  
children  
Magic hath stolen away.

The primroses scattered by April,  
The stars of the wide Milky Way,  
Cannot outnumber the hosts of the children  
Magic hath stolen away.

The buttercup green of the meadows,  
The snow of the blossoming may,  
Lovelier are not than the legions of children  
Magic hath stolen away.

The waves tossing surf in the moonbeam,  
The albatross lone on the spray,  
Alone know the tears wept in vain for the children  
Magic hath stolen away.

In vain: for at hush of the evening  
When the stars twinkle into the grey,  
Seems to echo the far-away calling of children  
Magic hath stolen away.

## FOUR QUEER TALES





## BERRIES

**T**HERE was an old woman  
Went blackberry picking  
Along the hedges  
From Weep to Wicking.  
Half a pottle —  
No more she had got,  
When out steps a Fairy  
From her green grot;  
And says, "Well, Jill,  
Would 'ee pick 'cc mo?"  
And Jill, she curtseys,  
And looks just so.  
"Be off," says the Fairy,  
"As quick as you can,  
Over the meadows  
To the little green lane,  
That dips to the hayfields  
Of Farmer Grimes:  
I've berried those hedges  
A score of times;  
Bushel on bushel  
I'll promise 'ee, Jill,  
This side of supper  
If 'ee pick with a will."

## FOUR QUEER TALES

She glints very bright,  
And speaks her fair;  
Then lo, and behold!  
She has faded in air.

Be sure old Goodie  
She trots betimes  
Over the meadows  
To Farmer Grimes.  
And never was queen  
With jewellery rich  
As those same hedges  
From twig to ditch;  
Like Dutchmen's coffers,  
Fruit, thorn, and flower —  
They shone like William  
And Mary's bower.  
And be sure Old Goodie  
Went back to Weep,  
So tired with her basket  
She scarce could creep.  
When she comes in the dusk  
To her cottage door,  
There's Towser wagging  
As never before,  
To see his Missus  
So glad to be  
Come from her fruit-picking  
Back to he.

## BERRIES

As soon as next morning  
Dawn was grey,  
The pot on the hob  
Was sinmming away;  
And all in a stew  
And a lugger-mugger  
Towser and Jill  
A-boiling of sugar,  
And the dark clear fruit  
That from Faërie came,  
For syrup and jelly  
And blackberry jam.

Twelve jolly gallipots  
Jill put by;  
And one little teeny one,  
One inch high;  
And that she's hidden  
A good thumb deep,  
Half way over  
From Wicking to Weep.

## OFF THE GROUND

**T**HREE jolly Farmers  
Once bet a pound  
Each dance the others would  
Off the ground.  
Out of their coats  
They slipped right soon,  
And neat and nicesome  
Put each his shoon.  
One — Two — Three! —  
And away they go,  
Not too fast,  
And not too slow;  
Out from the elm-tree's  
Noonday shadow,  
Into the sun  
And across the meadow.  
Past the schoolroom,  
With knees well bent  
Fingers a-flicking,  
They dancing went.  
Up sides and over,  
And round and round,  
They crossed click-clacking,  
The Parish bound,

## OFF THE GROUND

By Tupman's meadow  
They did their mile,  
Tee-to-tum  
On a three-barred stile.  
Then straight through Whipham,  
Downhill to Week,  
Footing it lightsome,  
But not too quick,  
Up fields to Watchet,  
And on through Wye,  
Till seven fine churches  
They'd seen skip by —  
Seven fine churches,  
And five old mills,  
Farms in the valley,  
And sheep on the hills;  
Old Man's Acre  
And Dead Man's Pool  
All left behind,  
As they danced through Wool.  
And Wool gone by,  
Like tops that seem  
To spin in sleep  
They danced in dream:  
Withy — Wellover —  
Wassop — Wo —  
Like an old clock  
Their heels did go.  
A league and a league  
And a league they went,

## FOUR QUEER TALES

And not one weary,  
And not one spent.  
And lo, and behold!  
Past Willow-cum-Leigh  
Stretched with its waters  
The great green sea.  
Says Farmer Bates,  
“I puffs and I blows,  
What’s under the water,  
Why, no man knows!”  
Says Farmer Giles,  
“My wind comes weak,  
And a good man drowned  
Is far to seek.”  
But Farmer Turvey,  
On twirling toes  
Up’s with his gaiters,  
And in he goes:  
Down where the mermaids  
Pluck and play  
On their twangling harps  
In a sea-green day;  
Down where the mermaids,  
Finned and fair,  
Sleek with their combs  
Their yellow hair. . . .  
Bates and Giles —  
On the shingle sat,  
Gazing at Turvey’s  
Floating hat.

## OFF THE GROUND

But never a ripple  
Nor bubble told  
Where he was upping  
Off plates of gold.  
Never an echo  
Rilled through the sea  
Of the feasting and dancing  
And minstrelsy.  
They called — called — called:  
Came no reply:  
Nought but the ripples'  
Sandy sigh.  
Then glum and silent  
They sat instead,  
Vacantly brooding  
On home and bed,  
Till both together  
Stood up and said: —  
“Us knows not, dreams not,  
Where you be,  
Turvey, unless  
In the deep blue sea;  
But excusing silver —  
And it comes most willing —  
Here's us two paying  
Our forty shilling;  
For it's sartin sure, Turvey,  
Safe and sound,  
You danced us square, Turvey,  
Off the ground!”



## THE THIEF AT ROBIN'S CASTLE

**T**HERE came a Thief one night to Robin's Castle,  
He climbed up into a Tree;  
And sitting with his head among the branches,  
A wondrous Sight did see.

For there was Robin supping at his table,  
With Candles of pure Wax,  
His Dame and his two beauteous little Children,  
With Velvet on their backs.

Platters for each there were shin-shining,  
Of Silver many a pound,  
And all of beaten Gold, three brimming Goblets,  
Standing the table round.

The smell that rose up richly from the Baked Meats  
Came thinning amid the boughs,  
And much that greedy Thief who snuffed the night  
air —  
His Hunger did arouse.

He watched them eating, drinking, laughing,  
talking,  
Busy with finger and spoon,

## THE THIEF AT ROBIN'S CASTLE

While three most cunning Fiddlers, clad in crimson,  
Played them a Supper Tune.

And he waited in the Tree-top like a Starling,  
Till the Moon was gotten low;  
When all the windows in the walls were darkened  
He softly in did go.

There Robin and his Dame in bed were sleeping,  
And his Children young and fair;  
Only Robin's Hounds from their warm kennels  
Yelped as he climbed the stair.

All, all were sleeping, Page and Fiddler,  
Cook, Scullion, free from care;  
Only Robin's Stallions from their stables  
Neighed as he climbed the stair.

A wee wan light the Moon did shed him,  
Hanging above the Sea,  
And he counted into his bag (of beaten Silver)  
Platters thirty-three.

Of Spoons three score; of jolly golden Goblets  
He stowed in four save one,  
And six fine seven-branched Cupid Candlesticks,  
Before his work was done.

Nine bulging bags of Money in a cupboard,  
Two Snuffers, and a Dish

## FOUR QUEER TALES

He found, the last all studded with great Garnets  
And shapen like a Fish.

Then tiptoe up he stole into a Chamber,  
Where on Tasselled Pillows lay  
Robin and his Dame in dreaming slumber,  
Tired with the summer's day.

That Thief he mimbled round him in the gloaming,  
Their Treasures for to spy,  
Combs, Brooches, Chains, and Rings, and Pins and  
Buckles  
All higgledy piggle-dy.

A Watch shaped in the shape of a flat Apple  
In purest Crystal set,  
He lifted from the hook where it was ticking  
And crammed in his Pochette.

He heaped the pretty Baubles on the table,  
Trinkets, Knick-knackerie,  
Pearls, Diamonds, Sapphires, Topazes, and  
Opals —  
All in his bag put he.

And there in night's pale gloom was Robin  
dreaming  
He was hunting the mountain Bear,  
While his Dame in peaceful slumber in no wise  
heeded  
A greedy Thief was there.

## THE THIEF AT ROBIN'S CASTLE

And that ravenous Thief he climbed up even  
    higher,  
    Till into a chamber small  
He crept where lay poor Robin's beauteous  
    Children,  
    Lovelier in sleep withal.

Oh, fairer was their hair than gold of Goblet,  
    Beyond Silver their cheeks did shine,  
And their little hands that lay upon the linen  
    Made that Thief's hard heart to pine.

But though a moment there his hard heart faltered,  
    Eftsoones he took them twain,  
And slipped them into his Bag with all his Plunder,  
    And soft stole down again.

Spoon, Platter, Goblet, Ducats, Dishes, Trinkets,  
    And those two Children dear,  
A-quaking in the clinking and the clanking,  
    And half bemused with fear,

He carried down the stairs into the Courtyard,  
    But there he made no stay,  
He just tied up his Garters, took a deep breath,  
    And ran like the wind away.

Past Forest, River, Mountain, River, Forest —  
    He coursed the whole night through,

## FOUR QUEER TALES .

Till morning found him come into a country  
Where none his Bad Face knew.

Past Mountain, River, Forest, River, Mountain —  
That Thief's lean shanks sped on,  
Till Evening found him knocking at a Dark House,  
His breath now well-nigh gone.

There came a little maid and asked his business;  
A Cobbler dwelt within;  
And though she much disliked the Bag he carried,  
She led the Bad Man in.

He bargained with the Cobbler for a lodging  
And soft laid down his Sack —  
In the Dead of Night, with none to spy or listen —  
From off his weary back.

And he taught the little Chicks to call him Father,  
And he sold his stolen Pelf,  
And bought a Palace, Horses, Slaves, and Peacocks  
To ease his wicked self.

And though the children never really loved him,  
He was rich past all belief;  
While Robin and his Dame o'er Delf and Pewter  
Spent all their days in Grief.

## SAM'S THREE WISHES; OR LIFE'S LITTLE WHIRLIGIG

“I’M thinking and thinking,” said old Sam Shore,  
“ ’Twere somebody *knocking* I heard at the door.”

From the clock popped the cuckoo and cuckooed  
out eight,

As there in his chair he wondering sate . . .

“There’s no one I knows on would come so late,

A-clicking the latch of an empty house

With nobbut inside ’un but me and a mouse. . . .

Maybe a-waking in sleep I be,

And ’twere out of a dream came that tapping to  
me.”

At length he cautiously rose, and went,

And with thumb upon latch awhile listening bent,

Then slowly drew open the door. And behold!

There stood a Fairy! — all green and gold,

Mantled up warm against dark and cold,

And smiling up into his candle shine,

Lips like wax, and cheeks like wine,

As saucy and winsome a thing to see

As are linden buds on a linden tree.

## FOUR QUEER TALES

Stock-still in the doorway stood simple Sam,  
A-ducking his head, with "Good-e'en to 'ee,  
Ma'am."

Dame Fairy she nods, and cries clear and sweet,  
"'Tis a *very* good-e'en, sir, when such folks meet.  
I know thee, Sam, though thou wist not of me,  
And I'm come in late gloaming to speak with thee;  
Though my eyes do dazzle at glint of your rush,  
All under this pretty green fuchsia bush."

Sam ducked once more, smiling simple and slow.  
Like the warbling of birds her words did flow,  
And she laughed, very merry, to see how true  
Shone the old man's kindness his courtesy through.  
And she nodded her head, and the stars on high  
Sparkled down on her smallness from out of the  
sky.

"A friend is a friend, Sam, and wonderful pleasant,  
And I'm come for old sake's sake to bring thee a  
present.

Three wishes, three wishes are thine, Sam Shore,  
Just three wishes — and wish no more,  
All for because, ruby-ripe to see,  
The pixy-pears burn in yon hawthorn tree,  
And your old milch cow, wheresoever she goes  
Never crops over the fairy-knowes.  
Ay, Sam, thou art old and thy house is lone,  
But there's Potencies round thee, and here is one! "

## SAM'S THREE WISHES

Poor Sam, he stared: and the stars o'erhead  
A shimmering light on the elm-tops shed.  
Like rilling of water her voice rang sweet,  
And the night-wind sighed at the sound of it.  
He frowned — glanced back at the empty grate,  
And shook very slowly his grey old pate:  
"Three wishes, my dear! Why, I scarcely knows  
Which be my cranny and which my toes!  
But I thank 'ee, Ma'am. kindly, and this I'd say,  
That the night of your passing is Michaelmas Day;  
And if it were company come on a sudden.  
Why, I'd ax for a fat goose to fry in the oven! "

And lo, and forsooth! as the words he was uttering,  
A rich puff of air set his candle a-guttering,  
And there rose in the kitchen a sizzling and  
sputtering,  
With a crackling of sparks and of flames a great  
fluttering,  
And — of which here could not be two opinions —  
A smoking-hot savour of sage and onions.  
Beam, wall and flagstones the kitchen was lit,  
Every dark corner and cranny of it  
With the blaze from the hearthstone. Copper and  
brass  
Winked back the winking of platter and glass.  
And a wonderful squeaking of mice went up  
At the smell of a Michaelmas supper to sup —  
Unctuous odours that wreathed and swirled  
Where'er frisked a whisker or mouse-tail twirled,



## FOUR QUEER TALES

While out of the chimney up into the night  
That ne'er-to-be-snuffed-too-much smoke took flight.  
"That's one," says the Fairy, finger on thumb,  
"So now, Mister Sam, there's but two to come! "  
She leaned her head sidelong; she lifted her chin,  
With a twinkling of eye from the radiance within.  
Poor Sam stood astounded; he says, says he,  
"I *wish* my old Mother was back with me,  
For if there was one thing she couldn't refuse  
'Twas a sweet thick slice from the breast of a  
goose."

But his cheek grew stiff and his eyes stared bright,  
For there, on her stick, pushing out of the night,  
Tap-tapping along, herself and no other,  
Came who but the shape of his dear old Mother!  
Straight into the kitchen she hastened and went,  
Her breath coming quick as if all but spent.  
"Why, Sam," says she, "the bird be turning,  
For my nose tells I that the skin's a-burning! "  
And down at the oven the ghost of her sat  
And basted the goose with the boiling fat.  
"Oho," cries the Fairy, sweet and small,  
"Another wish gone will leave nothing at all."  
And Sam sighs, "Bless 'ee, Ma'am, keep the other,  
There's nowt that I want now I have my Mother."  
But the Fairy laughs softly, and says, says she,  
"There's one wish left, Sam, I promised 'ee three.  
Hasten your *wish*, the hour creeps on,  
There's calling afield and I'm soon to be gone.

## SAM'S THREE WISHES

Soon as haps midnight the cocks will crow  
And me to the gathering and feasting must go."

Sam gazed at his Mother - - withered and wan,  
The rose in her cheek her bright hair, gone,  
And her poor old back bent double with years —  
And he scarce could speak for the salt, salt tears.  
"Well, well," he says, "I'm unspeakable glad:  
But — it bain't quite the same as when I was a lad.  
There's joy and there's joy, Ma'am, but to tell 'ee  
the truth

There's none can compare with the joy of one's  
youth.

And if it was possible, how could I choose  
But be back in boy's breeches to eat the goose;  
And all the old things — and my Mother the most,  
To shine again real as my own gatepost.  
What wouldn't I give, too, to see again wag  
The dumpity tail of my old dog, Shag!  
Your kindness, Ma'am, but all wishing was vain  
Unless us can both be young again."

A shrill, faint laughter from nowhere came . . .  
Empty the dark in the candle-flame. . . .

And there stood our Sam, about four foot high,  
Snub nose, shock hair, and round blue eye.  
Breeches and braces and coat of him too,  
Shirt on his back, and each clodhopping shoe  
Had shrunk to a nicety — button and hem  
To fit the small Sammie tucked up into them.

## FOUR QUEER TALES

There was his Mother, too; smooth, dear cheek,  
Lips as smooth as a blackbird's beak,  
Pretty arched eyebrows, the daintiest nose —  
While the smoke of the baking deliciously rose.

“ Come, Sammie,” she cries, “ your old Mammikin's  
joy,

Climb up on your stool, supper's ready, my boy.  
Bring in the candle, and shut out the night;  
There's goose, baked taties and cabbage to bite.  
Why, bless the wee lamb, he's all shiver and shake,  
And you'd think from the look of him scarcely  
awake!

If 'ee glour wi' those eyes, Sam, so dark and round,  
The elves will away with 'ee, I'll be bound! ”

So Sam and his Mother by wishes three  
Were made just as happy as happy can be.  
And there — with a bumpity tail to wag —  
Sat laughing, with tongue out, their old dog, Shag.  
To clatter of patter, bones, giblets and juice,  
Between them they ate up the whole of the goose.

But time is a river for ever in flow,  
The weeks went by as the weeks must go.  
Soon fifty-two to a year did grow.  
The long years passed, one after another,  
Making older and older our Sam and his Mother;  
And, alas and alack, with nine of them gone,  
Poor Shag lay asleep again under a stone.  
And a sorrowful dread would sometimes creep

### SAM'S THREE WISHES

Into Sam's dreams, as he lay asleep,  
That his Mother was lost, and away he'd fare,  
Calling her, calling her, ev'rywhere,  
In dark, in rain, by roads unknown,  
Under echoing hills, and alone, alone.  
What bliss in the morning to wake and see  
The sun shining green in the linden tree,  
And out of that dream's dark shadowiness  
To slip in on his Mother and give her a kiss,  
And go whistling off in the dew to hear  
The thrushes all mocking him, sweet and clear.

Still, moon after moon from heaven above  
Shone on Mother and son, and made light of love.  
Her roses faded, her pretty brown hair  
Had sorrowful grey in it everywhere.  
And at last she died, and was laid to rest,  
Her tired hands crossed on her shrunken breast.  
And Sam, now lonely, lived on and on  
Till most of his workaday life seemed gone.

Yet spring came again with its green and blue,  
And presently summer's wild roses too,  
Pinks, Sweet William, and sops-in-wine,  
Blackberry, lavender, eglantine.  
And when these had blossomed and gone their way,  
'Twas apples, and daisies and Michaelmas Day —  
Yes, spider-webs, dew, and haws in the may,  
And seraphs singing in Michaelmas Day.

## FOUR QUEER TALES

Sam worked all morning and *couldn't* get rest  
For a kind of a feeling of grief in his breast.  
And yet, not grief, but something more  
Like the thought that what happens has happened  
before.

He fed the chickens, he fed the sow,  
On a three-legged stool sate down to the cow,  
With a pail 'twixt his legs in the green in the  
meadow,  
Under the elm trees' lengthening shadow;  
And woke at last with a smile and a sigh  
To find he had milked his poor Jingo dry.

As dusk set in, even the birds did seem  
To be calling and calling from out of a dream.  
He chopped up kindling, shut up his shed,  
In a bucket of well-water soused his head  
To freshen his eyes up a little and make  
The drowsy old wits of him wider awake.  
As neat as a womanless creature is able  
He swept up his hearthstone and laid the table.  
And then o'er his platter and mug, if you please,  
Sate gloomily gooming at loaf and cheese —  
Gooming and gooming as if the mere sight  
Of his victuals could satisfy appetite!  
And the longer and longer he looked at them  
The slimmer slimmed upward his candle flame,

Blue in the air. And when squeaked a mouse  
'Twas loud as a trump in the hush of the house.

### SAM'S THREE WISHES

Then, sudden, a soft little wind puffed by,  
'Twixt the thick-thatched roof and the star-sown  
sky;  
And died. And then  
That deep, dead, wonderful silence again.

Then — soft as a rattle a-counting her seeds  
In the midst of a tangle of withered-up weeds —  
Came a faint, faint knocking, a rustle like silk,  
And a breath at the keyhole as soft as milk —  
Still as the flit of a moth. And then . . .  
That infinitesimal knocking again.

Sam lifted his chin from his fists. He listened.  
His wandering eyes in the candle glistened.  
Then slowly, slowly, rolled round by degrees —  
And there sat a mouse on the top of his cheese.  
He stared at this Midget, and it at him,  
Over the edge of his mug's round rim,  
And — as if it were Christian — he says, "Did 'ee  
hear  
A faint little tap-tap-tap-tapping, my dear?  
You was at supper and me in a maze,  
'Tis dark for a caller in these lone days,  
There's nowt in the larder. We're both of us old.  
And all of my loved ones sleep under the mould,  
And yet — and yet — as I've told 'ee before . . ."

*But if Sam's story you'd read to the end,  
Turn back to page 1, and press onward, dear friend;*

## FOUR QUEER TALES

*Yes, if you would stave the last note of this song,  
Turn back to page primus, and warble along!  
For all sober records of life (come to write 'em),  
Are bound to continue — well — ad infinitum!*

## **PLACES AND PEOPLE**





## A WIDOW'S WEEDS

A POOR old widow in her weeds  
Sowed her garden with wild-flower seeds;  
Not too shallow, and not too deep,  
And down came April — drip — drip -- drip.  
Up shone May, like gold, and soon  
Green as an arbour grew leafy June.  
And now all summer she sits and sews  
Where willow herb, comfrey, bugloss blows,  
Teasle and tansy, meadowsweet,  
Campion, toadflax, and rough hawksbit;  
Brown bee orchis, and Peals of Bells;  
Clover, burnet, and thyme she smells;  
Like Oberon's meadows her garden is  
Drowsy from dawn till dusk with bees.  
Weeps she never, but sometimes sighs,  
And peeps at her garden with bright brown eyes;  
And all she has is all she needs —  
A poor old Widow in her weeds.

“SOOEEP!”

BLACK as a chimney is his face,  
And ivory white his teeth,  
And in his brass-bound cart he rides,  
The chestnut blooms beneath.

“Sooeep, Sooeep!” he cries, and brightly peers  
This way and that, to see  
With his two light-blue shining eyes  
What custom there may be.

And once inside the house, he’ll squat,  
And drive his rods on high,  
Till twirls his sudden sooty brush  
Against the morning sky.

Then ’mid his bulging bags of soot,  
With half the world asleep,  
His small cart wheels him off again,  
Still hoarsely bawling, “Sooeep!”

MRS. MACQUEEN

(OR THE LOLLIE-SHOP)

WITH glass like a bull's eye,  
And shutters of green,  
Down on the cobbles  
Lives Mrs. MacQueen.

At six she rises;  
At nine you see  
Her candle shine out  
In the linden tree:

And at half-past nine  
Not a sound is nigh,  
But the bright moon creeping  
Across the sky;

Or a far dog baying;  
Or a twittering bird  
In its drowsy nest,  
In the darkness stirred;

Or like the roar  
Of a distant sea  
A long-drawn S-s-sh!  
In the linden tree.

## THE LITTLE GREEN ORCHARD

SOME one is always sitting there,  
In the little green orchard;  
Even when the sun is high  
In noon's unclouded sky,  
And faintly droning goes  
The bee from rose to rose,  
Some one in shadow is sitting there,  
In the little green orchard.

Yes, and when twilight is falling softly  
In the little green orchard;  
When the grey dew distils  
And every flower-cup fills;  
When the last blackbird says,  
"What — what!" and goes her way — s-sh!  
I have heard voices calling softly  
In the little green orchard.

Not that I am afraid of being there,  
In the little green orchard;  
Why, when the moon's been bright,  
Shedding her lonesome light,  
And moths like ghosties come,

## THE LITTLE GREEN ORCHARD

And the horned snail leaves home:  
I've sat there, whispering and listening there,  
In the little green orchard.

Only it's strange to be feeling there,  
In the little green orchard;  
Whether you paint or draw,  
Dig, hammer, chop, or saw;  
When you are most alone,  
All but the silence gone . . .  
Some one is waiting and watching there,  
In the little green orchard.

## POOR "MISS 7"

LONE and alone she lies,  
    Poor Miss 7,  
Five steep flights from the earth,  
    And one from heaven;  
Dark hair and dark brown eyes,—  
Not to be sad she tries,  
Still — still it's lonely lies  
    Poor Miss 7.

One day-long watch hath she,  
    Poor Miss 7,  
Not in some orchard sweet  
    In April Devon,—  
Just four blank walls to see,  
And dark come shadowily,  
No moon, no stars, ah me!  
    Poor Miss 7.

And then to wake again,  
    Poor Miss 7,  
To the cold night, to have  
    Sour physic given;  
Out of some dream of pain,  
Then strive long hours in vain

## **POOR "MISS 7"**

**Deep dreamless sleep to gain:  
Poor Miss 7.**

**Yet memory softly sings  
Poor Miss 7  
Songs full of love and peace  
And gladness even;  
Clear flowers and tiny wings,  
All tender, lovely things,  
Hope to her bosom brings —  
Happy Miss 7.**



## SAM

WHEN Sam goes back in memory,  
It is to where the sea  
Breaks on the shingle, emerald-green,  
In white foam, endlessly;  
He says — with small brown eye on mine —  
“I used to keep awake,  
And lean from my window in the moon,  
Watching those billows break.  
And half a million tiny hands,  
And eyes, like sparks of frost,  
Would dance and come tumbling into the moon,  
On every breaker tossed.  
And all across from star to star,  
I’ve seen the watery sea,  
With not a single ship in sight,  
Just ocean there, and me;  
And heard my father snore. And once,  
As sure as I’m alive,  
Out of those wallowing, moon-flecked waves  
I saw a mermaid dive;  
Head and shoulders above the wave,  
Plain as I now see you,  
Combing her hair, now back, now front,  
Her two eyes peeping through;

## SAM

Calling me, 'Sam!'— quietlike —'Sam!' . . .

But me . . . I never went,  
Making believe I kind of thought  
'Twas some one else she mcant . . .  
Wonderful lovely there she sat,  
Singing the night away,  
All in the solitudinous sea  
Of that there lonely bay.

"P'raps," and he'd smooth his hairless mouth,

"P'raps, if 'twere now, my son,  
P'raps, if I heard a voice say, 'Sam!' . . .  
Morning would find me gone."

## ANDY BATTLE

ONCE and there was a young sailor, yeo ho!  
And he sailed out over the sea  
For the isles where pink coral and palm branches  
blow,  
And the fire-flies turn night into day,  
Yeo ho!  
And the fire-flies turn night into day.

But the *Dolphin* went down in a tempest, yeo ho!  
And with thrce forsook sailors ashore,  
The *Portingales* took him where sugar-canec grow,  
Their slave for to be evermore,  
Yeo ho!  
Their slave for to be evermore.

With his musket for mother and brother, yeo ho!  
He warred with the Cannibals drear,  
In forests where panthers pad soft to and fro,  
And the *Pongo* shakes noonday with fear,  
Yeo ho!  
And the *Pongo* shakes noonday with fear.

Now lean with long travail, all wasted with woe,  
With a monkey for messmate and friend,

**ANDY BATTLE**

He sits 'neath the *Cross* in the cankering snow,  
And waits for his sorrowful end,  
Yeo ho!  
And waits for his sorrowful end.

## THE OLD SOLDIER

**T**HERE came an Old Soldier to my door,  
Asked a crust, and asked no more;  
The wars had thinned him very bare,  
Fighting and marching everywhere,  
    With a Fol rol dol rol di do.

With nose stuck out, and cheek sunk in,  
A bristling beard upon his chin —  
Powder and bullets and wounds and drums  
Had come to that Soldier as suchlike comes —  
    With a Fol rol dol rol di do.

'Twas sweet and fresh with buds of May,  
Flowers springing from every spray;  
And when he had supped the Old Soldier trolled  
The song of youth that never grows old,  
    Called Fol rol dol rol di do.

Most of him rags, and all of him lean,  
And the belt round his belly drawn tightsome in,  
He lifted his peaked old grizzled head,  
And these were the very same words he said —  
    A Fol-rol-dol-rol-*di*-do.

## THE PICTURE

**H**ERE is a sea-legged sailor,  
Come to this tottering Inn,  
Just when the bronze on its signboard is fading,  
And the black shades of evening begin.

With his head on thick paws sleeps a sheep-dog,  
There stoops the Shepherd, and see,  
All follow-my-leader the ducks waddle homeward,  
Under the sycamore tree.

Very brown is the face of the Sailor,  
His bundle is crimson, and green  
Are the thick leafy boughs that hang dense o'er the  
Tavern,  
And blue the far meadows between.

But the Crust, Ale, and Cheese of the Sailor,  
His Mug and his platter of Delf,  
And the crescent to light home the Shepherd and  
Sheep-dog  
The painter has kept to himself.

## THE LITTLE OLD CUPID

'T WAS a very small garden;  
The paths were of stone,  
Scattered with leaves,  
With moss overgrown;  
And a little old Cupid  
Stood under a tree;  
With a small broken bow  
He stood aiming at me.

The dog-rose in briars  
Hung over the weeds,  
The air was aflock  
With the floating of seeds;  
And a little old Cupid  
Stood under a tree;  
With a small broken bow  
He stood aiming at me.

The dovecote was tumbling,  
The fountain dry,  
A wind in the orchard  
Went whispering by;  
And a little old Cupid  
Stood under a tree;  
With a small broken bow  
He stood aiming at me.

## KING DAVID

**KING DAVID** was a sorrowful man:  
No cause for his sorrow had he;  
And he called for the music of a hundred harps,  
To ease his melancholy.

They played till they all fell silent:  
Played — and play sweet did they;  
But the sorrow that haunted the heart of King  
David  
They could not charm away.

He rose; and in his garden  
Walked by the moon alone,  
A nightingale hidden in a cypress-tree  
Jargoned on and on.

King David lifted his sad eyes  
Into the dark-boughed tree —  
“ Tell me, thou little bird that singest,  
Who taught my grief to thee? ”

But the bird in no wise heeded;  
And the king in the cool of the moon  
Hearkened to the nightingale's sorrowfulness,  
Till all his own was gone.



## THE OLD HOUSE

A VERY, very old house I know —  
And ever so many people go,  
Past the small lodge, forlorn and still,  
Under the heavy branches, till  
Comes the blank wall, and there's the door.  
Go in they do; come out no more.  
No voice says aught; no spark of light  
Across that threshold cheers the sight;  
Only the evening star on high  
Less lonely makes a lonely sky,  
As, one by one, the people go  
Into that very old house I know.

## BEASTS



## UNSTOOPING

**LOW** on his fours the Lion  
Treads with the surly Bear;  
But Men straight upward from the dust  
Walk with their heads in air;  
The free sweet winds of heaven,  
The sunlight from on high  
Beat on their clear bright cheeks and brows  
As they go striding by;  
The doors of all their houses  
They arch so they may go,  
Uplifted o'er the four-foot beasts,  
Unstooping, to and fro.

## ALL BUT BLIND

**A**LL but blind  
In his chambered hole  
Gropes for worms  
The four-clawed Mole.

All but blind  
In the evening sky  
The hooded Bat  
Twirls softly by.

All but blind  
In the burning day  
The Barn-Owl blunders  
On her way.

And blind as are  
These three to me,  
So, blind to Some-one  
I must be.

## NICHOLAS NYE

**T**HISTLE and darnell and dock grew there,  
And a bush, in the corner, of may,  
On the orchard wall I used to sprawl  
In the blazing heat of the day;  
Half asleep and half awake,  
While the birds went twittering by,  
And nobody there my lone to share  
But Nicholas Nye.

Nicholas Nye was lean and grey,  
Lame of a leg and old,  
More than a score of donkey's years  
He had seen since he was foaled;  
He munched the thistles, purple and spiked,  
Would sometimes stoop and sigh,  
And turn to his head, as if he said,  
"Poor Nicholas Nye!"

Alone with his shadow he'd drowse in the meadow,  
Lazily swinging his tail,  
At break of day he used to bray,—  
Not much too hearty and halc;  
But a wonderful gumption was under his skin,  
And a clear calm light in his eye,

## BEASTS

And once in a while: he'd smile: —  
Would Nicholas Nye.

Seem to be smiling at me, he would,  
From his bush in the corner, of may,—  
Bony and ownerless, widowed and worn,  
Knobble-kneed, lonely and grey;  
And over the grass would seem to pass  
'Neath the deep dark blue of the sky,  
Something much better than words between me  
And Nicholas Nye.

But dusk would come in the apple boughs,  
The green of the glow-worm shine,  
The birds in nest would crouch to rest,  
And home I'd trudge to mine;  
And there, in the moonlight, dark with dew,  
Asking not wherefore nor why,  
Would brood like a ghost, and as still as a post,  
Old Nicholas Nye.

## THE PIGS AND THE CHARCOAL-BURNER

THE old Pig said to the little pigs,  
    " In the forest is truffles and mast,  
Follow me then, all ye little pigs,  
    Follow me fast! "

The Charcoal-burner sat in the shade  
    With his chin on his thumb,  
And saw the big Pig and the little pigs,  
    Chuffling come.

He watched 'neath a green and giant bough,  
    And the pigs in the ground  
Made a wonderful grisling and gruzzling  
    And greedy sound.

And when, full-fed, they were gone, and Night  
    Walked her starry ways,  
He stared with his cheeks in his hands  
    At his sullen blaze.



## FIVE EYES

**I**N Hans' old Mill his three black cats  
Watch the bins for the thieving rats.  
Whisker and claw, they crouch in the night,  
Their five eyes smouldering green and bright:  
Squeaks from the flour sacks, squeaks from where  
The cold wind stirs on the empty stair,  
Squeaking and scampering, everywhere.  
Then down they pounce, now in, now out,  
At whisking tail, and sniffing snout;  
While lean old Hans he snores away  
Till peep of light at break of day;  
Then up he climbs to his creaking mill,  
Out come his cats all grey with meal —  
Jekkel, and Jessup, and one-eyed Jill.

## GRIM

**B**ESIDE the blaze of forty fires  
Giant Grim doth sit,  
Roasting a thick-wooled mountain sheep  
Upon an iron spit.  
Above him wheels the winter sky,  
Beneath him, fathoms deep,  
Lies hidden in the valley mists  
A village fast asleep —  
Save for one restive hungry dog  
That, snuffing towards the height,  
Smells Grim's broiled supper-meat, and spies  
His watch-fire twinkling bright.

## SUMMER EVENING

**T**HE sandy cat by the Farmer's chair  
Mews at his knee for dainty fare;  
Old Rover in his moss-greened house  
Mumbles a bone, and barks at a mouse;  
In the dewy fields the cattle lie  
Chewing the cud 'neath a fading sky;  
Dobbin at manger pulls his hay:  
Gone is another summer's day.

## EARTH FOLK

**T**HE cat she walks on padded claws,  
The wolf on the hills lays stealthy paws,  
Feathered birds in the rain-sweet sky  
At their ease in the air, flit low, flit high.

The oak's blind, tender roots pierce deep,  
His green crest towers, dimmed in sleep,  
Under the stars whose thrones are set  
Where never prince hath journeyed yet.



## **WITCHES AND FAIRIES**



## AT THE KEYHOLE

“GRILL me some bones,” said the Cobbler,  
“Some bones, my pretty Sue;  
I’m tired of my lonesome with heels and soles,  
Springsides and uppers too;  
A mouse in the wainscot is nibbling;  
A wind in the keyhole drones;  
And a sheet webbed over my candle, Susie,  
Grill me some bones! ”

“Grill me some bones,” said the Cobbler,  
“I sat at my tic-tac-to;  
And a footstep came to my door and stopped,  
And a hand groped to and fro;  
And I peered up over my boot and last;  
And my feet went cold as stones: —  
I saw an eye at the keyhole, Susie! —  
Grill me some bones! ”



## THE OLD STONE HOUSE

**N**OTHING on the grey roof, nothing on the  
brown,  
Only a little greening where the rain drips down;  
Nobody at the window, nobody at the door,  
Only a little hollow which a foot once wore;  
But still I tread on tiptoe, still tiptoe on I go,  
Past nettles, porch, and weedy well, for oh, I know  
A friendless face is peering, and a clear still eye  
Peeps closely through the casement as my step goes  
by.

## THE RUIN

**W**HEN the last colours of the day  
Have from their burning ebbed away,  
About that ruin, cold and lone,  
The cricket shrills from stone to stone;  
And scattering o'er its darkened green,  
Bands of the fairies may be seen,  
Chattering like grasshoppers, their feet  
Dancing a thistledown dance round it:  
While the great gold of the mild moon  
Tinges their tiny acorn shoon.

## THE RIDE-BY-NIGHTS

UP on their brooms the Witches stream,  
Crooked and black in the crescent's gleam;  
One foot high, and one foot low,  
Bearded, cloaked, and cowed, they go.  
'Neath Charlie's Wane they twitter and tweet,  
And away they swarm 'neath the Dragon's feet.  
With a whoop and a flutter they swing and sway,  
And surge pell-mell down the Milky Way.  
Betwixt the legs of the glittering Chair  
They hover and squeak in the empty air.  
Then round they swoop past the glimmering Lion  
To where Sirius barks behind huge Orion;  
Up, then, and over to wheel amain,  
Under the silver, and home again.

## PEAK AND PUKE

**F**ROM his cradle in the glamourie  
They have stolen my wee brother,  
Roused a changeling in his swaddlings  
For to fret mine own poor mother.  
Pules it in the candle light  
Wi' a cheek so lean and white,  
Chinkling up its eyne so wee,  
Wailing shrill at her an' me.  
It we'll neither rock nor tend  
Till the Silent Silent send,  
Lapping in their waesome arms  
Him they stole with spells and charms,  
Till they take this changeling creature  
Back to its own fairy nature —  
Cry! Cry! as long as may be,  
Ye shall ne'er be woman's baby!

## THE CHANGELING

“**AHOY**, and ahoy!”

’Twixt mocking and merry —

“Ahoy and ahoy, there,

Young man of the ferry!”

She stood on the steps

In the watery gloom —

That Changeling — “Ahoy, there!”

She called him to come.

He came on the green wave,

He came on the grey,

Where stooped that sweet lady

That still summer’s day.

He fell in a dream

Of her beautiful face,

As she sat on the thwart

And smiled in her place.

No echo his oar woke,

Float silent did they,

Past low-grazing cattle

In the sweet of the hay.

And still in a dream

At her beauty sat he,

Drifting stern foremost

Down — down to the sea.

## THE CHANGELING

Come you, then: call,  
When the twilight apace  
Brings shadow to blood  
On the loveliest face;  
You shall hear o'er the water  
Ring faint in the grey —  
“Ahoy, and ahoy, there!”  
And tremble away;  
“Ahoy, and ahoy! . . . ”  
And tremble away.

## THE MOCKING FAIRY

“WON’T you look out of your window, Mrs. Gill? ”

Quoth the Fairy, nidding, nodding in the garden;  
“*Can’t* you look out of your window, Mrs. Gill? ”

Quoth the Fairy, laughing softly in the garden;  
But the air was still, the cherry boughs were still,  
And the ivy-tod ’neath the empty sill,  
And never from her window looked out Mrs. Gill  
On the Fairy shrilly mocking in the garden.

“What have they done with you, you poor Mrs. Gill? ”

Quoth the Fairy, brightly glancing in the garden;  
“Where have they hidden you, you poor old Mrs. Gill? ”

Quoth the Fairy dancing lightly in the garden;  
But night’s faint veil now wrapped the hill,  
Stark ’neath the stars stood the dead-still Mill,  
And out of her cold cottage never answered Mrs. Gill

The Fairy mimbling mambling in the garden.

## BEWITCHED

**I** HAVE heard a lady this night,  
Lissom and jimp and slim,  
Calling me — calling me over the heather,  
'Neath the beech boughs dusk and dim.

I have followed a lady this night,  
Followed her far and lone,  
Fox and adder and weasel know  
The ways that we have gone.

I sit at my supper 'mid honest faces,  
And crumble my crust and say  
Nought in the long-drawn drawl of the voices  
Talking the hours away.

I'll go to my chamber under the gable,  
And the moon will lift her light  
In at my lattice from over the moorland  
Hollow and still and bright.

And I know she will shine on a lady of witchcraft,  
Gladness and grief to see,  
Who has taken my heart with her nimble fingers,  
Calls in my dreams to me:



## WITCHES AND FAIRIES

Who has led me a dance by dell and dingle  
My human soul to win,  
Made me a changeling to my own, own mother,  
A stranger to my kin.

## THE HONEY ROBBERS

**T**HERE were two Fairies, Gimmul and Mel,  
Loved Earth's Man honey passing well;  
Oft at the hives of his tame bees  
They would their sugary thirst appease.  
When even began to darken to night,  
They would hie along in the fading light,  
With elf-locked hair and scarlet lips,  
And small stone knives to slit the skeps,  
So softly not a bee inside  
Should hear the woven straw divide.  
And then with sly and greedy thumbs  
Would rifle the sweet honeycombs.  
And drowsily drone to drone would say,  
"A cold, cold wind blows in this way";  
And the great Queen would turn her head  
From face to face, astonishèd,  
And, though her maids with comb and brush  
Would comb and soothe and whisper, "Hush!"  
About the hive would shrilly go  
A keening — keening, to and fro;  
At which those robbers 'neath the trees  
Would taunt and mock the honey-bees,  
And through their sticky teeth would buzz  
Just as an angry hornet does.

## WITCHES AND FAIRIES

And when this Gimmul and this Mel  
Had munched and sucked and swilled their fill,  
Or ever Man's first cock could crow  
Back to their Faërie Mounds they'd go.  
Edging across the twilight air,  
Thieves of a guise remotely fair.

## LONGLEGS

**L**ONGLEGS — he yelled “Coo-ee!”

And all across the combe  
Shrill and shrill it rang — rang through  
The clear green gloom.  
Fairies there were a-spinning,  
And a white tree-maid  
Lifted her eyes, and listened  
In her rain-sweet glade.  
Bunnie to bunnie stamped; old Wat  
Chin-deep in bracken sate;  
A throstle piped, “I’m by, I’m by!”  
Clear to his timid mate.  
And there was Longlegs straddling,  
And hearkening was he,  
To distant Echo thrilling back  
A thin “Coo-ee!”

## MELMILLO

**T**HREE and thirty birds there stood  
In an elder in a wood;  
Called Melmillo — flew off three,  
Leaving thirty in a tree;  
Called Melmillo — nine now gone,  
And the boughs held twenty-one;  
Called Melmillo — eighteen  
Left but three to nod and preen;  
Called Melmillo — three — two — one —  
Now of birds were feathers none.

Then stole slim Melmillo in  
To that wood all dusk and green,  
And with lean long palms outspread  
Softly a strange dance did tread;  
Not a note of music she  
Had for echoing company;  
All the birds were flown to rest  
In the hollow of her breast;  
In the wood thorn, elder, willow —  
Danced alone — lone danced Melmillo.

# EARTH AND AIR



## TREES

OF all the trees in England,  
Her sweet three corners in,  
Only the Ash, the bonnie Ash  
Burns fierce while it is green.

Of all the trees in England,  
From sea to sea again,  
The Willow loveliest stoops her boughs  
Beneath the driving rain.

Of all the trees in England,  
Past frankincense and myrrh,  
There's none for smell, of bloom and smoke,  
Like Lime and Juniper.

Of all the trees in England,  
Oak, Elder, Elm and Thorn,  
The Yew alone burns lamps of peace  
For them that lie forlorn.



## SILVER

**S**LOWLY, silently, now the moon  
Walks the night in her silver shoon;  
This way, and that, she peers, and sees  
Silver fruit upon silver trees;  
One by one the casements catch  
Her beams beneath the silvery thatch;  
Couched in his kennel, like a log,  
With paws of silver sleeps the dog;  
From their shadowy coat the white breasts peep  
Of doves in a silver-feathered sleep;  
A harvest mouse goes scampering by,  
With silver claws, and silver eye;  
And moveless fish in the water gleam,  
By silver reeds in a silver stream.

## NOBODY KNOWS

**O**FTEN I've heard the Wind sigh  
By the ivied orchard wall,  
Over the leaves in the dark night,  
Breathe a sighing call,  
And faint away in the silence,  
While I, in my bed,  
Wondered, 'twixt dreaming and waking,  
What it said.

Nobody knows what the wind is,  
Under the height of the sky,  
Where the hosts of the stars keep far away house  
And its wave sweeps by —  
Just a great wave of the air,  
Tossing the leaves in its sea,  
And foaming under the eaves of the roof  
That covers me.

And so we live under deep water,  
All of us, beasts and men,  
And our bodies are buried down under the sand,  
When we go again;  
And leave, like the fishes, our shells,  
And float on the Wind and away,  
To where, o'er the marvellous tides of the air,  
Burns day.

## WANDERERS

WIDE are the meadows of night,  
And daisies are shining there,  
Tossing their lovely dew,  
Lustrous and fair;  
And through these sweet fields go,  
Wanderers amid the stars —  
Venus, Mercury, Uranus, Neptune,  
Saturn, Jupiter, Mars.

Tired in their silver, they move,  
And circling, whisper and say,  
Fair are the blossoming meads of delight  
Through which we stray.

## MANY A MICKLE

**A** LITTLE sound —  
Only a little, a little —  
The breath in a reed,  
A trembling fiddle;  
The trumpet's ring,  
The shuddering drum;  
So all the glory, bravery, hush  
Of music come.

A little sound —  
Only a stir and a sigh  
Of each green leaf  
Its fluttering neighbour by;  
Oak on to oak,  
The wide dark forest through —  
So o'er the watery wheeling world  
The night winds go.

A little sound,  
Only a little, a little —  
The thin high drone .  
Of the simmering kettle,  
The gathering frost,  
The click of needle and thread;  
Mother, the fading wall, the dream,  
The drowsy bed.

## WILL EVER?

WILL he ever be weary of wandering,  
The flaming sun?  
Ever weary of waning in lovelight,  
The white still moon?  
Will ever a shepherd come  
With a crook of simple gold,  
And lead all the little stars  
Like lambs to the fold?

Will ever the Wanderer sail  
From over the sea,  
Up the river of water,  
To the stones to me?  
Will he take us all into his ship,  
Dreaming, and waft us far,  
To where in the clouds of the West  
The Islands are?

## SONGS



## THE SONG OF THE SECRET

WHERE is beauty?

Gone, gone:

The cold winds have taken it

With their faint moan;

The white stars have shaken it,

Trembling down,

Into the pathless deeps of the sea:

Gone, gone

Is beauty from me.

The clear nakèd flower

Is faded and dead;

The green-leafed willow,

Drooping her head,

Whispers low to the shade

Of her boughs in the stream,

Sighing a beauty,

Secret as dream.



## THE SONG OF SOLDIERS

AS I sat musing by the frozen dyke,  
There was one man marching with a bright steel  
pike,  
Marching in the dayshine like a ghost came he,  
And behind me was the moaning and the murmur  
of the sea.

As I sat musing, 'twas not one but ten —  
Rank on rank of ghostly soldiers marching o'er the  
fen,  
Marching in the misty air they showed in dreams  
to me,  
And behind me was the shouting and the shattering  
of the sea.

As I sat musing, 'twas a host in dark array,  
With their horses and their cannon wheeling on-  
ward to the fray,  
Moving like a shadow to the fate the brave must  
dree,  
And behind me roared the drums, rang the trum-  
pets of the sea.

## THE PEES' SONG

**T**HOUZANDZ of thornz there be  
On the Rozez where gozez  
The Zebra of Zee:  
Sleek, striped, and hairy,  
The steed of the Fairy  
Princess of Zee.

Heavy with blozzomz be  
The Rozez that growzez  
In the thickets of Zee,  
Where grazez the Zebra,  
Marked Abracadeeebra  
Of the Princess of Zee.

And he nozcz the poziez  
Of the Rozez that growzez  
So luvez'm and free,  
With an eye, dark and wary,  
In search of a Fairy,

Whose Rozez he knowzez  
Were not honeyed for he,  
But to breathe a sweet incense  
To solace the Princess  
Of far-away Zee.

## A SONG OF ENCHANTMENT

A SONG of Enchantment I sang me there,  
In a green-green wood, by waters fair,  
Just as the words came up to me  
I sang it under the wild wood tree.

Widdershins turned I singing it low,  
Watching the wild birds come and go;  
No cloud in the deep dark blue to be seen  
Under the thick-thatched branches green.

Twilight came; silence came;  
The planet of Evening's silver flame;  
By darkening paths I wandered through  
Thickets trembling with drops of dew.

But the music is lost and the words are gone  
Of the song I sang as I sat alone,  
Ages and ages have fallen on me —  
On the wood and the pool and the elder tree.

## DREAM-SONG

**SUNLIGHT**, moonlight,  
Twilight, starlight —  
Gloaming at the close of day,  
And an owl calling,  
Cool dew's falling  
In a wood of oak and may.

Lantern-light, taper-light,  
Torchlight, no-light:  
Darkness at the shut of day,  
And lions roaring,  
Their wrath pouring  
In wild waste places far away.

Elf-light, bat-light,  
Touchwood-light and toad-light,  
And the sea a shimmering gloom of grey,  
And a small face smiling  
In a dream's beguiling  
In a world of wonders far away.

## THE SONG OF SHADOWS

**S**WEEP thy faint strings, Musician,  
With thy long lean hand;  
Downward the starry tapers burn,  
Sinks soft the waning sand;  
The old hound whimpers couched in sleep,  
The embers smoulder low;  
Across the walls the shadows  
Come, and go.

Sweep softly thy strings, Musician,  
The minutes mount to hours;  
Frost on the windless casement weaves  
A labyrinth of flowers;  
Ghosts linger in the darkening air,  
Hearken at the open door;  
Music hath called them, dreaming,  
Home once more.

## THE SONG OF THE MAD PRINCE

WHO said, "Peacock Pie"?

The old King to the sparrow:

Who said, "Crops are ripe"?

Rust to the harrow:

Who said, "Where sleeps she now?"

Where rests she now her head,

Bathed in eve's loveliness"? —

That's what I said.

Who said, "Ay, mum's the word";

Sexton to willow:

Who said, "Green dusk for dreams,

Moss for a pillow"?

Who said, "All Time's delight

Hath she for narrow bed;

Life's troubled bubble broken"? —

That's what I said.

## THE SONG OF FINIS

**A**T the edge of All the Ages  
A Knight sate on his steed,  
His armour red and thin with rust,  
His soul from sorrow freed;  
And he lifted up his visor  
From a face of skin and bone,  
And his horse turned head and whinnied  
As the twain stood there alone.

No bird above that steep of time  
Sang of a livelong quest;  
No wind breathed,  
Rest:  
“Lone for an end!” cried Knight to steed,  
Loosed an eager rein —  
Charged with his challenge into Space:  
And quiet did quiet remain.







